

48726/B




1/2 WFF.

3532

55

6.90

\$60.00.
✓



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2019 with funding from
Wellcome Library

<https://archive.org/details/b2933066x>

ILLUSTRATIONS
OF THE
DIVINE GOVERNMENT;
TENDING TO SHEW,
That every thing is under the Direction
OF
Infinite Wisdom and Goodness,
AND
WILL TERMINATE IN THE PRODUCTION
OF
UNIVERSAL PURITY AND HAPPINESS.

BY T. SOUTHWOOD SMITH, M. D.

SECOND EDITION, CONSIDERABLY ENLARGED.

———Beholding in the sacred light
Of his essential reason all the shapes
Of swift contingency, all successive ties
Of action propagated through the sum
Of possible existence, he at once
Down the long series of eventful time
So fix'd the dates of being, so dispos'd
To every living soul of every kind,
The field of motion and the hour of rest,
That all conspir'd to his supreme design,
TO UNIVERSAL GOOD!

AKENSIDE.

London :

Printed by G. Smallfield, Hackney ;
FOR SHERWOOD, NEELY, AND JONES, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1817.

348378.

PREFACE.

IF it be reasonable to refer the formation of the earth and of all the objects and beings on its surface to an intelligent agent, and if we cannot doubt, that we are entirely dependent upon our Creator for all which we possess and hope, it must be of unspeakable importance to ascertain what his character really is; and if there be indeed reason to believe, that, in fashioning our frame, and appointing that it should undergo at a certain period a total disorganization, he do not by that change design to destroy us, but to qualify us for a higher state and for nobler pursuits, no inquiry can be so interesting as that which relates to our destiny in the ages which are before us.

Were it possible to arm ourselves against the calamities of life, as Perseus is fabled to

have been armed by the gods for his far-famed expedition, he who should commence the career of existence without his helmet, falchion and ægis, would be universally regarded as destitute of reason; but that individual is infinitely better prepared to encounter the evil with which he has to combat, who believes in the doctrine of a Providence, and knows the ground of his belief, that is, who views all events with the eye and meets them with the feeling of a Christian Philosopher. With this belief, no combination of circumstances can make him, for any considerable period, unhappy; without it, nothing can afford him a pleasure of which Wisdom ought not to fear to participate, and with which Philosophy ought not to blush to be content.

It was under the influence of this conviction that the author of the following work commenced it with a trembling mind, afraid to undertake a task of so much magnitude and interest. But, appearing to himself to have formed a clear, consistent and cheering view of the nature and object of the dispensations of the great Parent of mankind, and

having, in the retirement of private life, been a witness, on occasions which to him were deeply impressive, of the tendency of that view to heighten the pleasure of the hour of enjoyment, and to sustain the mind in the day of sorrow, he thought that, by directing the attention of his fellow-christians to a comprehensive and connected investigation of the subject, he might possibly contribute something to the removal of their doubts and the confirmation of their faith. If, in any degree, he have succeeded in this object, his success will ever appear to him invaluable.

In one part of the work an expression or two occur, which some persons may consider strong, and perhaps uncandid, relative to doctrines which appear to him unjust, malevolent and immoral; but he trusts the spirit which this volume breathes, will secure him from the suspicion of attributing any thing of injustice, malevolence or immorality to the persons who maintain the opinions which he condemns. The intelligent inquirer will have made but little progress in his religious investigation, before he learns

the necessity of distinguishing between rectitude of character and excellence of system; between the malignant tendency of a creed, and the benignity of the heart which embraces it. Neither justice nor charity can exist, unless this distinction be constantly kept up; and it is because it is so seldom made, that justice and charity are, among theologians, scarcely any thing but a name.

Were there any means by which the author could enable his readers to perceive the real feeling which prompts the wish, he would venture particularly to solicit their attention, and more especially the attention of those of them who may be believers in the doctrine of Limited Punishment terminated by Destruction, to that part of the work in which this subject is discussed. He has there endeavoured to meet fairly and fully, all the arguments, as far as he has been able to learn them, which are urged in support of this hypothesis. Feeling, as he does, a thorough persuasion that each is satisfactorily answered, and that, on the other hand,

difficulties are stated against the doctrine, which are insuperable, he cannot but think that the reasoning which appears to his own mind so forcible, may possibly make some impression on that of the candid and patient inquirer. He is well aware, however, of the different estimate which different persons form of the force of the same arguments, and instead of cherishing a positive feeling that he is right, he is much more disposed to bear in mind, the possibility of his being under those common influences by which we impose upon ourselves respecting the conclusiveness of our own reasonings, and to attend with thankfulness to any one who may do him the favour to correct any mistake into which he may have fallen.

To the friends who encouraged him to proceed with this work, by honouring him with their names as subscribers to it, as soon as they heard it was projected, the author returns his thanks; and the ardent testimony of approbation which he has received from some of them, since its publication, has excited the hope, that he

has not written wholly in vain, and that these pages may, perhaps, be the means of speaking peace to the perturbed mind, and of solacing the sorrows of the mourner, when the hand which penned them is motionless, and the heart which dictated them shall have ceased to beat with human emotion.

Yeovil, November, 1817.

CONTENTS.

Part First.

Of the Divine Government.

	Page
Sec. 1. Of the Proof of the Government of God	13
Sec. 2. Of the Manner in which the Divine Government is administered	35
Sec. 3. Of the Design of the Divine Government	56

Part Second.

Introduction. Of the kind of Evidence which is necessary to establish the Doctrine of the Ultimate Purity and Happiness of all Mankind	61
Of the Evidence in favour of the Final Restoration of all Mankind to Purity and Happiness, <i>distinct</i> from that afforded by the express declarations of Scripture	66

CHAPTER I.

Of the argument in favour of the Doctrine of Universal Restoration, derived from the Perfections of God.	
Sec. 1. Of the Goodness of God	67
Sec. 2. Of the Universality of the Divine Benevolence ..	93

Sec. 3. Of the impossibility of frustrating the Design of the Deity	Page 103
Sec. 4. Of the Harmony of the Divine Perfections	106

CHAPTER II.

Of the argument in favour of the Doctrine of the Final Purity and Happiness of all mankind, derived from the Nature of Man.....	113
---	-----

CHAPTER III.

Of the argument in favour of the Ultimate Purity and Happiness of all Mankind, derived from the Nature and Object of Punishment.....	132
--	-----

Part Third.

Of the Objections which are urged against the Doctrine of the Ultimate Purity and Happiness of all Mankind, whether derived from those passages of Scripture, or from those reasonings which are supposed to prove the Doctrine of Endless Misery, or from those which are conceived to favour the Doctrine of Limited Punishment, terminated by Destruction	147
--	-----

CHAPTER I.

Of Endless Misery	149
Sec. 1. Of the term Everlasting	155
Sec. 2. Of the application of the same word to the Hap- piness of the Righteous and the Punishment of the Wicked	177
Sec. 3. Of the argument in favour of Endless Misery, derived from the phrase Unquenchable Fire.....	183

	Page
Sec. 4. Of the argument in favour of Endless Misery, founded on the case of Judas	192
Sec. 5. Of the argument in favour of Endless Misery, de- rived from the language which is used concerning the Sin against the Holy Ghost.....	196
Sec. 6. Of the argument in favour of Endless Misery, de- duced from the Parable of the Great Gulph....	205
Sec. 7. Of the opinion that there will be no Successive Duration in a future state.....	208

CHAPTER II.

Of the arguments conceived to favour the Doctrine of
Endless Misery, which are not founded on the express
declarations of Scripture.

Sec. 1. Of the Infinite Evil of Sin.....	212
Sec. 2. Of the argument in favour of Endless Misery, founded on the Divine Justice.....	216
Sec. 3. Of the argument in favour of Endless Misery, founded on the Divine Sovereignty.....	231

CHAPTER III.

Of the Doctrine of Limited Punishment, terminated by Destruction	239
---	-----

Part Fourth.

Of the Scriptural Evidence in favour of the Doctrine of the Final Restoration of all Mankind to Purity and Hap- piness.....	256
---	-----

CHAPTER I.

Of the passages of Scripture which imply that all Mankind will be ultimately Restored to Purity and Happiness .	261
--	-----

CHAPTER II.

	Page
Of the passages of Scripture which appear expressly to affirm, that all Mankind will be Restored to Purity and Happiness	279
Appendix.....	299

ERRATUM.

Page 78, line 9, for 'each' read *ease*.

ILLUSTRATIONS
OF THE
DIVINE GOVERNMENT.

Part First.

SECTION I.

OF THE PROOF OF THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD.

IN endeavouring to account for the existence of the world, we find it impossible to resist the conclusion, that it is the production of a Being of almighty power, and of perfect goodness. It is evident that it did not create itself, for creation necessarily supposes a pre-existing intelligence. It is evident that the creatures on its surface did not give being to themselves, for they do not comprehend the mode of their own existence. They must therefore derive their origin from some being who understood their nature, and who endowed them with the faculties they possess.

The simplest ideas we seem capable of forming of this Being are, that he is intelligent, and that

he is uncaused. Intelligent he must be, for there are in his works, proofs of exquisite and amazing skill ; and if there be any thing of which we may be certain, it is, that wherever there is contrivance there must have been a contriver, and that an adaptation of means to an end, cannot possibly exist, without the operation of a being, who perceived and designed the end, and fitted the means to accomplish it.

That the Great First Cause of all things must be himself uncaused, is also a truth which we are obliged to admit : for if we imagine that the immediate Creator of the world derives his existence and power from some superior being, we must suppose, either that this superior being is uncaused, in which case it is he who will answer to our conception of the Deity, or that he is dependent upon a third, and that this third is dependent on a fourth, and so on in an infinite series. But this infinite succession of dependent beings, requires a first and independent cause, as much as any one in the series ; and however far we may choose to carry our thoughts backward, we must at length come to the conclusion, that there is some one independent, underived being, the peculiarity of whose nature we endeavour to express, by saying that he is self-existent. It is this being that we term God, and that we suppose to be the Creator of the world.

If in this visible creation there be proofs of such contrivance as cannot but convince the mind, that it is the production of infinite intelligence, it likewise contains indications of such power, as we must acknowledge to be altogether without limits. He who could create such a world as this, must be able to do whatever it is possible for wisdom and power to accomplish. We have therefore no difficulty in conceiving that the author of this part of the creation is the author of the universe, however unlimited it be, or however amazing the degree of wisdom and power necessary to the production of it. For, though other worlds may be much greater in magnitude than this, and may contain much higher and nobler displays of wisdom, (which may possibly be the case, though we can scarcely conceive how even infinite wisdom can go beyond some contrivances with which we are acquainted,) yet there are in this globe sufficient appearances of it, to account for any which may exist in other parts of the creation, however glorious they may be.

The proof of the goodness of the Creator, is as complete as that of his existence. We infer his existence from the appearance of design in his works, but every proof of design is equally a proof of benevolence, because the object of every contrivance is the production of good.

We are not therefore more certain of the existence of the Deity, than of his goodness ; for the very facts upon which we ground our belief of the one, equally establish the other.

If then the world be indeed the production of a Being who is infinite in wisdom, power and goodness, the proof of his constant and perfect superintendence of it seems to be irresistible. For since he is perfect in wisdom, he could not have created it without some design, and that design, whatever it be, he must be careful to accomplish. Whether we suppose he created it with a view to display to his intelligent creatures his wisdom and power, or with a design to impart enjoyment to an inconceivable number and variety of beings, we must believe, in the one case, that he will at all times provide against the interruption of that order which alone can illustrate his perfections, and the destruction of those faculties which are necessary to perceive them ; and in the other, that he will suffer no event to happen which can prevent or impair the happiness he determines to bestow. In every successive period, therefore, he must have exactly the same reason to superintend the events which take place in his creation as he had at first to perform the glorious work.

Nothing is more evident than that the inanimate and insensible part of the creation, is fitted

up for the accommodation, and designed to promote the happiness of the sentient. The inanimate world is continually in motion, and every movement must influence, in a greater or less degree, the enjoyment of the animal creation. He, therefore, who constructed the wonderful fabric of the world, and so admirably adapted it to the enjoyment of the innumerable beings it contains, continually watches over the movements which take place within it, that they may not break in upon the order nor impair the happiness he has established.

But the animal creation itself is likewise continually in motion. An animal possesses the power of originating motion, by which sometimes its existence, and always its happiness, in a greater or less degree are affected. The care of the Deity must therefore extend to the movements of the animal, no less than to those of the material world.

Such then being the constitution of things ; it being evident, that the material * is made for the animal creation ; that the material world is continually changing, thereby producing a change in the animal ; that the animal world itself is endowed with the property of changing

* By *material* creation is here always meant that part of the world which is supposed to be without sensation, whether organized or unorganized.

its situation, and every change of *state* being necessarily attended with a change of *sensation*, the doctrine we maintain is, that the Deity, with a view of making that sensation just what he has seen fit to appoint, continually superintends the changes which induce it.

If every particle of matter in the globe be more or less in motion, and if we can fix our eye on no spot where there is not organized and conscious existence, the view which is here given of divine providence is large enough to take in the superintendence of the myriads of changes, which, according to this supposition, must be taking place in every instant of time. If every star which shines in the firmament of heaven be a world crowded with inhabitants ; if every fixed star be a sun which illumines a system of worlds, as our sun illumines our system ; and if all these worlds and systems be filled with organized and happy creatures, (which is at once the most sublime and the most probable view it is possible to take of the creation,) this account of the divine administration is sufficient to comprehend the superintendence of all the events which must be taking place in every instant of time, throughout this universe of being, to the extent of which we can set no limits, and in the contemplation of which all our faculties are lost.

Whoever believes that the system of the universe did not start into being without a designing cause, acknowledges that its author is every where present. Omnipresence is an attribute which seems essential to the very notion of a God. It is true we cannot understand how at one and the same instant he is present in every part of the universe ; but this difficulty in conceiving of the mode of the fact, neither does nor ought to bring any doubt upon our belief of the fact itself ; because our comprehension of every subject whatever, is equally obscure and imperfect. We understand nothing of the mode of the existence of any being. We know that we ourselves exist, but we have no conception of the manner in which the wonderful phenomena of life are produced and continued. Of the existence of the Deity it is impossible to doubt. We see his works : we feel his power : but in what manner he exists we do not know, because we have no data upon which to form even a conjecture respecting the mode of his existence. The reason that we do not know how he is every where present, is, because we do not know how he is present any where ; that is, because we do not at all comprehend the mode of his existence.

We see that man is bound to a little spot of earth, and that his presence at one time is restricted to that spot. This being the only

kind of existence with which our senses have made us acquainted, it is natural that we should find it difficult to conceive how a Being can at the same moment be here, and in the most distant part of the globe, and in the most distant planet! But whatever be the mode of the existence of the Deity, we must necessarily conceive of it as different from our own. For at all events he has been present in this globe; in the planets which form our system; in the sun which is its centre; in every fixed star; in a word, wherever we behold a planet or a star. Whatever these bodies are, they are something; some of them are of immense magnitude, and are placed at such distances from each other, as to be beyond our power of calculation: and no one will contend that they placed themselves where they are. Now he who could place them there; he, the constitution of whose nature admits of his ever having been present at these inconceivable distances, must possess a nature so essentially different from ours, that we ought to have no difficulty in supposing that it may allow of his being present at them at one and the same time, as easily as at successive periods. As our mode of existence confines our presence to one spot at one time, his may be such as necessarily makes him present in every part of the universe.

Many writers on this subject appear needlessly to have magnified the difficulty which attends our conception of it. They seem in general to think that the Deity bears *no* relation whatever to space : that in fact he is actually present *no where*, and that of course it is only in a figurative sense that he is omnipresent. But surely it is more just to conceive of him as *really* pervading all space, as *actually* present in every part of the universe. This idea is at least distinct, and enables us to conceive in a satisfactory manner of his universal operation ; while the view commonly entertained is extremely confused : for do what we will, we can form no idea of a being who bears no relation to space ; and if we could, we should still be pressed with the difficulty of conceiving how a being can operate where he is not : but if we admit the hypothesis now proposed, we can readily believe that the Deity operates every where, for according to it he *is* every where.

In whatever manner, however, we may conceive of the omnipresence of the Deity, we must all admit the fact itself, that by the necessity of his nature, he is every where, and that by the same necessity he knows every thing. And no other admission is requisite to establish in the most satisfactory manner his universal and perfect government. His benevolent eye is upon me ;

his Almighty arm is beneath me : with the situation in which I am placed, he is infinitely better acquainted in all its parts, than I am with any single circumstance in it. He knows that a certain event is about to befall me : he understands its nature : he foresees its consequences : he is perfectly wise : he is infinitely good. Would he then permit it to happen, did he not foresee it would answer some wise and benevolent purpose ? Can we conceive that he is every where present without acting ? That he knows every thing without availing himself of the power which this circumstance affords him, to prevent what is wrong and to accomplish what is right ? That, though he is perfectly acquainted with every evil which is about to arise, and perfectly able to prevent it, he will not stretch out his hand to do so ? That the original source of all activity is the only inactive being in the universe, and the source of all energy the only being who does not exert his power ?

If this opinion be absurd in itself, and unsupported by the shadow of reason, there is but one other conclusion which can be adopted, namely, that every event which happens to every creature, takes place according to the appointment of the Deity. Nothing can be more frivolous than the objection, that the watchfulness which this supposes over the most trifling concerns of the most

insignificant creature is unworthy of the Sovereign of the universe. Whatever it was not beneath him to create, it cannot be beneath him to provide for and to protect ; and whatever is of any importance, either to the present or the future comfort of any being, is worthy of care in the degree in which it may be the means of enjoyment or the cause of suffering. Its *minuteness* cannot render it unworthy of notice, if it be of any consequence ; and what would detract from the dignity and greatness of the Governor of the universe would be, not his taking care of these minute concerns, but his neglecting them.

A great part of animal enjoyment depends upon what we are accustomed to consider as little things. A great number of little things, particularly if they often recur, become of greater importance than any single event, however vast or momentous ; they produce, taken together, a larger sum of enjoyment, and there seems no possible way of taking care of this collective sum, but by taking care of particular events. And, indeed, the superintendence of minute events implies as much dignity as the superintendence of great events, and our admiration is never more excited than when we contemplate an intelligence, which, while it directs the most grand and mighty movements, overlooks not the

most insignificant concern capable of affecting the ultimate result. That superintendence which extends its care to the least obvious circumstance, no less than to the most striking, is certainly more perfect than that which regards only such events, as no intelligent being could possibly overlook.

The apprehension that this constant superintendence of events, from the minutest circumstance which is capable of exciting sensation, up to those mighty movements which affect the condition of worlds, must be attended with perplexity to the Deity, originates in conceptions equally unenlightened and imperfect. He is at all times present every where, and every where is capable of exerting his power. The superintendence of *all* the events in the universe, therefore, can be attended with no more trouble to him than the superintendence of any *single* event. The whole of possibility must at all times be equally easy to the Being who possesses infinite power.

We have therefore abundant reason to rest in the delightful assurance, that of every event which takes place all the care is taken, which perfect wisdom can dictate, and infinite goodness require : that all its consequences are foreseen and considered ; that its time, its place, its measure, its duration, are all appointed by him

who first set in motion the complicated and mighty wheels which bring it round.

Of this sublime truth, which nothing but its greatness can lead us to doubt, we may be further assured, by the consideration of the relation which the Creator necessarily bears to his creatures. He is not merely their Creator. By the very act of creation, he unites himself to them by a tie, which that which binds a parent to his child can but feebly represent. He is their Father in a much more near and real sense than any human parent is the father of his offspring, and the best feelings of earthly parents must be exceeded by his in the degree in which he is more perfect than they. Yet a good father lives but to labour for the welfare of his family. A tender mother, while she presses her child to her bosom, anxiously considers how she may best avail herself of the situation in which she is placed to advance its happiness ; wishes she had the command of circumstances, and could prevent the occurrence of every event capable of endangering its virtue and enjoyment.

This power, so vainly desired by human parents, is possessed by the Universal Parent for all his offspring ; and is it possible to believe that he will not exert it for their welfare ? With unerring wisdom and unbounded goodness, must

he not *feel* towards them in the *best* manner, and since no power in the universe is capable of controlling his will, must he not at all times *act* towards them as these feelings dictate ?

No other consideration surely can be necessary to make every intelligent being satisfied with his lot, and resigned to the dispensations which befall him. Many of the events of life, it is true, are deeply afflictive. Often our enjoyments seem given us but to be removed, and even the most secure, we hold by an uncertain tenure. The inequalities in health ; in the duration of life ; in the distribution of property ; the prevalence of natural and moral evil in their thousand shapes, sometimes press with such severity upon the mind, as to create even in the most pious and confiding, a doubt whether a Being of perfect benevolence be indeed seated at the helm of affairs. Our very hearts die within us when sickness and death assail our beloved friends. When the heart on which our image was engraven, and which beat with generous affection for us, is insensible and cold ; when in that dark and narrow bed, from which they cannot arise, sleep a father, a wife, a child, a friend, we feel a sorrow which refuses to be comforted. We dwell upon their excellences with a mournful pleasure. We think of the happy hours we have spent in their society,

hours never to return, with a feeling which nearly approaches to despair. *That they are no more* ; that they have ceased to think, to feel, to act, at least for us ; that that eye which used to gladden at our approach is dark, and can no more beam upon us with tenderness and love ; that those lips which have enlightened us with the counsels of wisdom, or soothed our souls with the accents of hallowed and virtuous affection, are silent for ever, no more to solace us in sorrow ; no more to excite or to heighten our pleasure : while these thoughts press upon the mind, (and on the loss of our dear and virtuous friends they do incessantly press upon it, sinking it to the dust,) the universe is a blank to us. No longer do we discover any traces of that supreme and unchanging goodness which we had been accustomed to contemplate with delight. But even in these moments of sadness we must be unjust to ourselves, and to the author of our mercies, if we are not soon revived by the consciousness of benevolence, to which the severity of anguish may for a while have made us insensible. The privation of our friends, afflictive as it is, is never without benefit to us. It is then we feel that we are born for immortality ; that the world is not our home ; that we are travelling to a fairer clime ; it is then that we enter into religion, and feel its genuine

spirit. The same happy effects are often produced by sickness, and to the natural and moral disorders which prevail, we owe the production and the growth of the highest excellences of our nature. In a word, an attentive consideration of what are termed the evils of life, enables us to discover so much of the truest benevolence in many of them, as may well induce us to bear with resignation those whose design we cannot so fully comprehend, until it shall please our heavenly Father to give us clearer light and stronger vision.

It is true, that the evil we suffer, and, indeed, that the general train of events, is the result of laws which we cannot without absurdity suppose the Deity to be continually changing and suspending, for the benefit of individuals. Neither does any rational believer in a providence maintain such an opinion. It is not necessary to his argument to suppose, that these general laws have ever *once* been suspended. From a conviction that he has evidence of the fact, he may believe, that on some occasions of supreme importance they have been suspended ; but the great argument for the doctrine of a providence would remain just the same, even though it could be demonstrated, that the laws by which the universe is governed, have operated with un-deviating regularity from the beginning. For

whoever believes that these general laws were appointed by a Being of infinite wisdom and goodness, must admit that he foresaw all the consequences which would result from their operation, in every instant of time and to every individual. If, therefore, when he appointed them, he foresaw that they would give rise to any event inconsistent with perfect benevolence, he would have so modified them, as effectually to have prevented its occurrence ; or he would have provided for its counteraction by the operation of secondary causes. Whether the Deity govern the universe by such an original adjustment as secures, with undeviating order, the occurrence of every thing in its proper season, place and manner, according to the plan which his wisdom and goodness have ordained ; or whether he govern it by a continual superintendence of events, every thing, on either supposition, is entirely in his hands. It is possible that the first is his plan ; he may have adopted the second ; both must be alike easy to him : but since both were equally in his power, he can have been induced to choose the one rather than the other, only because the one is better adapted than the other to accomplish the purposes of benevolence : and it seems scarcely possible for us not to conclude, that these purposes may be better effected by the second than by the first,

and therefore that this is the plan which he has adopted.

To sum up the whole argument. If of every event all the care is not taken, which it is right should be taken, the administration of the world is imperfect ; but the wisdom, power and goodness which are spent on the minutest and the meanest object we can contemplate, necessarily lead to the conclusion, that their author possesses these attributes in a perfect measure ; and since they have been exerted in the production of particular objects, they must be employed in the government of the whole. We have therefore the most solid ground to adopt the sublime and cheering conclusion, that nothing can happen without the knowledge and permission of unerring wisdom and perfect goodness, and that all the vast affairs of the universe, in every particular circumstance, and in every instant of time, are under the wisest and the best direction.

The preceding arguments are founded on the perfections which the Deity is universally acknowledged to possess, and their truth must be admitted by every consistent theist : but if God have given to his intelligent offspring a revelation of his will ; if he have altered the course of nature in attestation of its truth ; if to prove the divinity of the mission of the great personage whom he raised up to communicate it, he en-

dowed him with the power of performing such stupendous works as no being unassisted by him could possibly accomplish ; if mankind were in want of a revelation ; if the revelation actually given be in every respect suited to supply it ; if it be calculated to rectify their errors, to purify their hearts, to exalt their hopes, to dignify their pursuits, to promote their truest welfare here, and to prepare them for pure and ever-increasing happiness hereafter : if all the circumstances of time, place and method were admirably adapted to give it effect, and to secure the most important objects it is designed to accomplish, then is the doctrine of providence established on a new basis. Every Christian *must* believe that the affairs of mankind are under the direction of the Deity ; that he has not cut himself off from all interference with the wants and happiness of his creatures ; that he does interpose for their welfare as he sees occasion ; for the Christian system is one of the most illustrious and delightful instances of that interposition.

If from the fact itself of a divine revelation, we descend to the particular doctrines which it contains, we shall find the most decisive evidence of this truth. It is recognized in every page ; it is affirmed on innumerable occasions, and in every variety of form. God is there

represented as the Sovereign Arbiter of events ; as the Great Being who sitteth on the circle of the earth, judging among the nations. It is he who causeth the sun to shine and the rain to descend ; it is he who giveth healthful and fruitful seasons ; it is he who rideth on the wings of the wind, and it is his voice which thunders in the storm. By him kings reign and princes decree justice : he exalteth one and abaseth another : he turneth round the mighty wheel of events, retaining every individual in the situation which he judges fit. “ He hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on the face of the earth ; he hath determined their appointed times, and the place of their habitation.”

Our revered Master assures us, that not even a sparrow falleth to the ground, without the will of our heavenly Father ; and that the very hairs of our head are all numbered ; meaning, it is evident, that our most trifling concerns are appointed by him. “ Behold,” says he, “ the fowls of the air : for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns ; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they ? And why are ye anxious about raiment ? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow ; they toil not, neither do they spin ; and yet Solomon in all

his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which flourisheth to-day and to-morrow is cast into the furnace, will he not much more clothe you? Take not therefore anxious thought, saying, What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed? For your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

The argument which our Lord here employs is beautiful and affecting. Every one must have felt its force. When in a solitary ramble our eye has been struck with a little flower blooming in a secluded spot; when we have examined the perfection of all its parts; the richness, the variety, the exquisite beauty of its tints; when we have considered the care which has been taken of this humble plant, and the inimitable skill which has been employed in the construction of it, which of us has not been deeply impressed with the truth which our divine instructor here teaches us? Which of us has not said to himself—Can so much care have been spent upon this little flower, and can I, humble and insignificant though I am, be overlooked by the Author of my being? It is impos-

sible. There must be a God : there must be a Providence ; and I, and the myriads of creatures who in common with me enjoy the boon of existence, have reason to rejoice.

SECTION II.

OF THE MANNER IN WHICH THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT IS ADMINISTERED.

WHEN the Deity is represented as appointing and controlling every event, it may seem difficult to conceive how this can be reconciled with the agency and accountability of man. A little consideration, however, will shew that these truths are not incompatible with each other.

Though the Sovereign Arbiter of events regulates and determines every thing, yet he carries on the administration of the world by the *instrumentality* of other beings. Seldom does he act *directly*; seldom is he the *immediate* cause of any thing. He has left the developement of his vast plan to the operation of what are termed secondary causes; but these can act only so far and in such a manner as he has appointed.

The material world is governed by certain general laws, which are never interrupted except on occasions of supreme importance, foreseen and provided for from the beginning. These laws, though thus steady and invariable in their operation, bring about in every instant of time, precisely that condition only of the material

world which he appoints, and which is necessary to carry on his purposes with regard to his animal and moral creation.

The animal and moral world he governs by laws equally fixed and invariable; but being of a nature different from that of the material world, they require to be governed by different laws. By different laws, therefore, they are governed: by laws admirably and exactly suited to its nature, each is guided to its destined end.

The material world being without sensation and thought, is governed by a particular set of laws. The animal world possessing sensation and thought, is governed by another set. By sensation and thought an animal is induced to act. Every animal possesses a fixed and determinate constitution, according to which, sensation and thought are excited in it in a particular, determinate manner. The great agent in inducing sensation and thought in the animal, is the material world. A certain state of the material world will inevitably produce a certain sensation in an animal, possessing a particular constitution: that sensation will produce a particular volition, and that volition will lead, certainly, to a particular action. It only requires, therefore, an exact knowledge of the constitution of the animal world to render its state at all times precisely what may be required:

for he who perfectly understands the constitution of the material and the animal worlds, and has a sovereign control over both, has only to adapt the state of the one to that of the other, to make both at any and at all periods, exactly what he wishes. While every animal goes on regularly to exercise its different functions, he may at all times maintain the whole animal world in the condition he pleases: for he may so modify the operation of the material world upon it, as inevitably to bring it into the state he wishes, unless it violate its nature, which of course is impossible. Thus, then, we see how a sovereign control may be exercised over the material and animal worlds, while yet both invariably act according to the settled principles of their nature.

If we ascend in the scale of creation, we shall find that the principle of the divine administration is exactly the same. Man is endowed not only with the faculties of sensation and thought, but with the power of distinguishing between the rectitude and immorality of conduct. He is capable of understanding his obligations and the grounds of them. Certain actions appear to him to be good: others he regards as evil. The performance of the one is attended with a consciousness that he has acted right, and excites the sensation of happiness; the performance of

the other is attended with an inward conviction that he has acted wrong, and produces misery. All this takes place in a fixed and invariable manner, according to certain laws which are termed principles of his nature, and the faculty on which this discrimination and feeling depends, is termed, his *moral* nature.

Now it is obvious, that to a certain extent, a being thus endowed, may be governed exactly in the same manner as a creature who possesses only an animal nature. In him, as well as in the mere animal, sensations will be excited by the external circumstances in which he is placed. In him too, a particular sensation will excite a particular volition; but the exercise of this volition will be attended with a result which is never found in the animal: with a consciousness that he has acted well or ill: with a feeling of approbation or of disapprobation: with a sensation of happiness or misery, arising purely from the action itself. This train of sensation becomes itself a new source of action; but it arises according to certain fixed laws, and operates as steadily as any other principle of his nature, or as any law of the material world. He, therefore, who perfectly understands *this* nature, who knows how every circumstance will affect this *moral* agent, and who has a sovereign control over events, can govern him with the same

steadiness with which he regulates the animal or the material world: can make him at all times feel, and think, and act, as may be necessary to carry on the great designs of his administration, without violating any principle of his nature. By adapting the particular situation in which he is placed, to the particular state of his mind, he can excite whatever volition, and secure whatever action he pleases. What is maintained, then, is, that with respect to every individual in the world, there is this exact adaptation of circumstances to his temper, his habits, his wants, so that while he is left to the full and free exercise of every faculty he possesses, he can feel and act only as the Sovereign of the Universe appoints; because the circumstances which excite his sensations and volitions, are determined by him. It is not just to suppose that the Deity exercises any such control over his creatures, as to force them to act contrary to their will, or to violate any principle of their nature: they always act, and must act, according to their will, and in conformity to their nature; but, at the same time, he secures his own purpose, by placing them in circumstances which so operate upon their nature, as certainly to induce the conduct he requires.

Volition cannot arise, as is often imagined, at the pleasure of the mind. The term volition,

expresses that state of the mind which is immediately previous to the actions which are called voluntary ; but that state is not induced by the mind itself, but by objects operating upon it. The circumstances in which a percipient being is placed excite sensations, and sensations ideas. Sensations and ideas induce that peculiar condition of the mind which is termed pleasurable, or its opposite which is termed painful: the feeling of pleasure excites desire; that of pain aversion: will is the result of this state of the mind. Prove to the mind that an object is desirable, that is, that it will induce pleasure, and you immediately excite in it the volition to possess it: prove to it that an object will occasion pain and you excite the volition to avoid it. Volition then, it is manifest, depends on the object, whatever it be, which the mind contemplates as desirable or otherwise. Take away the object, there is no volition; satisfy it that the object can affect it neither with pleasure nor pain, there is no volition. So that volition does not spring up in the mind of its own accord, and without cause, but is entirely dependent upon objects perceived to be, or supposed to be, desirable. In a word, and to repeat what has already been said, sensations and ideas are attended with the feelings of pleasure or of pain: these induce desire or aversion, and these volition,

with as much certainty and steadiness as the law of gravitation produces the phenomena which are dependent upon it.

Volition being thus dependent on the circumstances in which an individual is placed, any given volition may be excited in him by a certain modification of his circumstances. We find that the tempers of different men are infinitely various; the Deity has made a corresponding variety in the situations in which he has placed them. To every individual he has assigned his allotted work: to every intelligent and moral agent he has given a certain part of his administration to carry on, and in order to qualify him for it, he has adjusted to the particular constitution of his nature, every circumstance of his being, from the first instant of his existence to that which terminates his earthly career. If what is termed his natural disposition be such, as would seem to render him incapable of performing it, the situation in which he is placed, is adapted to it, and is such as to excite, to repress or to modify it, till it becomes exactly what is necessary to fit him for his work; so that every individual is strictly an instrument raised up and qualified by God to carry on the wise and benevolent purposes of his government.

Suppose it is his will to lead men to the discovery of the most interesting truths respecting

the phenomena of nature, and the laws by which the universe is governed; he endows an individual with a clear and capacious mind; he places him in circumstances favourable to the development of his intellectual faculties; he leads him to observe, to reflect, to investigate; he forms him to those habits of patient and profound inquiry which are necessary to elicit the truths to be disclosed, and sufficient to secure him from every temptation to carelessness and dissipation: he raises up a NEWTON. Suppose after having for wise, though perhaps inscrutable reasons, permitted the most low and degrading notions to prevail respecting his own character, government and worship, he determines to lead back the minds of men to purer and nobler sentiments, and to overthrow those corrupt systems of religion which have prevailed for ages, and in the support of which the passions and interests of men are now engaged, he raises up an individual whose mind he enlightens; whose soul he fills with an ardent zeal for the purity of religion and the simplicity of its rites; whose spirit danger does but excite and suffering cannot subdue; who, though cities and empires arm against him, and one general cry of execration and menace follow him from land to land, goes on with undaunted courage to expose abuses, and to call in a louder and louder voice

for reformation : it is the voice of a **LUTHER** which makes **Corruption** rage, and **Superstition** tremble. Suppose it is his will to save a people in love with liberty, and worthy because capable of enjoying it, from oppression, and to exhibit to the world an example of what the weak who are virtuous and united, may effect against the strong who are corrupt and tyrannical : in the very season when he is needed he forms, and in the very station where his presence is necessary he places, a **WASHINGTON**. And suppose it is his will to pour the balm of consolation into the wounded heart, to visit the captive with solace, to extend mercy to the poor prisoner, to admit into his noisome cell the cheering beams of his sun, and his refreshing breezes, he breathes the genuine spirit of philanthropy into some chosen bosom ; he superadds an energy which neither the frown of power, nor the menace of interest, nor the scorn of indifference can abate ; which exhibits so strongly to the view of men the horrors of the dungeon, as to force them to suspend for a while their business and their pleasures ; to feel for the sufferings of others, and to learn the great lessons, that the guilty are still their brethren ; that it is better to reclaim than to destroy ; that the punishment which is excessive is immoral ; that that which does not aim to reform is unjust, and that which does not

actually do so, unwise : he gives to a suffering world the angel-spirit of a HOWARD.

The bodily frame and the natural temper of an individual may seem, as has already been observed, ill adapted to execute the work which the Deity has determined to perform by him : yet no *force* is employed to induce him to do it. He is not *compelled* to act against his volition, but the circumstances in which he is placed are so adapted to his corporeal, his mental and his moral constitution, as to excite the requisite volition. Suppose his bodily frame is weak ; his temper irritable ; his mind bold, impetuous and rash : the part assigned him in the great drama of life requires uncommon bodily exertion : he must face the storm ; he must endure the extremes of heat and cold ; often he must lie unpillowed and unsheltered ; his fatigue excessive ; the supply even of the common necessities of existence, scanty and irregular. How can all this be without his perishing ? He is led to adopt that regimen and exercise, together perhaps with that course of medicine, which strengthen his debilitated frame : gradually he is inured to fatigue and toil, and gradually he becomes capable of sustaining an astonishing degree of both. In order to ensure his success, the utmost patience, gentleness, caution and foresight, are necessary. But his temper is irri-

table, and his mind bold, impetuous and rash. Experience teaches him the folly of indulging this morbid sensibility ; it occasions him bitter mortification ; his impetuosity hurries him into errors which bring with them a long train of calamities ; his boldness disappoints his cherished hopes ; his rashness snatches from him some favourite object at the very moment when success is placing it in his hand. The school of life teaches him to act better the part of life ; present failure prepares him for future success ; he learns that if he would escape perpetual vexation and lasting misery, he must check the first risings of passion, reflect before he acts, and act with caution.

Suppose the disposition of another is so mild as almost to degenerate into weakness ; his caution is in danger of inducing irresolution ; and he is in the habit of considering and re-considering every circumstance so minutely and so often, that he nearly loses the season of action. He is wealthy, attached to wealth, and full of the timidity which riches induce. Yet this is the man who is to take a leading part in some great event which requires promptitude, decision, uncommon effort, unconquerable perseverance, the certain sacrifice of a great portion of wealth, perhaps the loss of all. He is not *forced* along an unwilling agent ; he is not sur-

prised out of the caution of his character ; he does not give up his wealth with reluctance and murmuring. He is led to view the event in which he is destined to take so great a share, as so important, that even *he* ceases to doubt of the propriety and necessity of endeavouring to effect it, and as so valuable that he deems it worth the sacrifice he is called upon to make : the path marked out for him is so vividly displayed before his eyes, that he cannot but see it : he thinks it is the path of duty ; he knows it is that of honour ; he believes it will be that of happiness. His agency in this event, therefore, is now so far from being against his volition, that restraint would be placed upon that volition were he not the agent in it that he is. This then is the way in which the Deity influences his creatures. In order to secure his purposes, he does not cause them to act against their volition ; but he so impresses their understandings and their hearts, as to make them feel that their happiness depends on the performance of the work he assigns them.

Nor is it any objection to this view of the manner in which the divine administration is carried on, that it implies a constant influence of the Deity over the human mind. There is no reasonable being who does not exercise some influence of this kind over the minds of others. What a powerful influence does the parent exert

over the child, the master over the servant, brother over brother, and friend over friend! How can I measure the degree, how can I estimate the value of the influence which that revered instructor exercised over my mind, who first imbued it with the principles of wisdom and rectitude? What do I not owe to that dear companion of my youth, on whose early intercourse with me memory still delights to dwell; who was my superior in age, in attainment, in wisdom, in virtue; who taught me so much while seeming to learn, and governed me so entirely without meaning to control? How many of the sensations which cheer my heart at this hour are the result of an influence which commenced at that distant period! How much of my present character is wholly dependent on that influence! It was he who corrected that disposition, the seed of which had long lain dormant in my heart; which then was springing up rapidly, and which, had it been suffered to fix its root deeply there, would have made me a totally different being. It was he who first led me into that train of thought which directed the future pursuits of my mind, placed me in the station of life I occupy, formed the connexions which bind me by the strongest and the sweetest ties to my fellow-beings; made me what I am, and determined what I am to be. It was my

friend who influenced me: it was a higher Being, a wiser and better friend, the unerring and unchanging friend of both, who influenced him.

May not these considerations suffice to give us a clear and just conception of the kind of influence which the Deity exercises over us, and by which he works his purposes in us and by us? It differs from that of our wisest and best friend only in being as much wiser and better, as wisdom and goodness in absolute perfection are different from the faint and transient indications of these attributes which are found in mortals.

The only objection of importance which can be urged against this view of the divine government, is, that it seems to lessen accountability, and to destroy the distinction between virtue and vice. Let us not be deceived by the sound of words. When we say that man is accountable, what do we mean? We can only mean that he will be punished for doing what he knows is wrong, and rewarded for performing what he is conscious is right. It is that rectitude of will which leads him to discharge his duty, which constitutes him virtuous: it is that perversion of mind which induces him to violate it, which renders him vicious. When his volition is good, and he obeys it, we say that he is an object of approbation, and worthy of reward: when his

volition is evil, and he yields to it, we say that he is an object of disapprobation, and worthy of punishment. It is the nature of his volition which determines our notion respecting his worth or his demerit. We neither do nor ought to regard the *cause* of his volition. It is the evil of his will of which we disapprove, and to which it is necessary to apply the discipline of correction.

You demand why, since my volition is independent of myself, and excited by circumstances over which I have no control, am I accountable for its nature, or liable to punishment if it be evil? The reply is obvious. This objection is founded on the implied presumption that volition is induced at the pleasure of the mind, and that it is the exertion of this power in exciting an evil volition which constitutes guilt. For when it is asked, why am I to be punished for my volition, since it is independent of myself? the inquirer must pre-suppose that he is to be punished for his volition *because* it is dependent upon himself, which is assuming as true the very point in dispute, and raising an objection on that assumption. If, however, there be any truth in the account which has been given of the origin of volition, that assumption is totally fallacious.

I am not to be punished for my volition, you

say, because it is independent of myself and excited by circumstances over which I have no control. I reply, if your volition be evil, and you obey it, it is that very circumstance which renders you worthy of punishment, and that the dependence or independence of the volition on yourself does not at all affect the question. Your volition is evil: you deserve punishment: why? *In order that that evil volition may be corrected.* Punishment is not retrospective but prospective. You are to be punished not because you have yielded to an evil volition; but in order that you may yield to an evil volition no more. To inflict pain for the past, any further than the past has reference to the future, is revenge, not punishment: were it perfectly certain that an evil volition which is past would be attended with no ill consequences in time to come, it would be neither necessary nor just to visit it with suffering; but because an evil volition is evil, that is, because it tends to produce unhappiness, it is to be punished, in order that the misery it threatens may be prevented. It is the incorrect conception which is formed of the nature and object of punishment, therefore, which lies at the foundation of this objection, and which makes the subject appear so difficult to many persons; and I cannot but think that all doubt and difficulty respecting it will be

removed from the mind of every one who will consider with attention what is said on this subject in the third chapter of this work.

The train of circumstances in which an individual has been placed has given rise to a disposition, the indulgence of which is incompatible with his own happiness and with that of his fellow-beings. This disposition it is necessary to correct: this correction is accomplished by causing him to pass through another train of circumstances which makes him feel the evil of his conduct; and this discipline, being attended with suffering, is expressed by the term punishment.

Such, then, being the foundation of praise and blame; of reward and punishment; it is obvious, that a person is an object of moral approbation, and is worthy of reward when his volition is good, and when he obeys that volition: that he is an object of moral disapprobation, and is worthy of punishment when his volition is evil, and when, notwithstanding the voice which speaks within him, and which warns him of its nature, he yields to its impulse. The gold which incites the midnight plunderer to rob, is not blameable, though it is the immediate cause of the volition which induces the evil deed: it is the volition itself which is evil, and which requires to be rectified, and punishment

is the process, the moral discipline by which its correction is effected.

Thus, then, we seem to have a clear and just conception of the manner in which the whole train of circumstances which form the character and induce the conduct of moral agents, may be entirely the appointment of the Deity, while the agents themselves are at the same time the subjects of praise and blame, of reward and punishment.

Were there no evil in the world there could be no possible objection to this view of the subject.* Were every one virtuous and happy, every heart would rejoice to trace to the Deity its excellences and its pleasures. But how can he who is perfect in benignity, be the author of evil? It is this which perplexes the mind, and the answer to the question involves the great inquiry about which intelligent and pious persons have in all ages exercised their most anxious thoughts, and leads directly to the consideration of the *design* of the Deity in the

* Neither would there be the same objection to it in the minds of many persons, did it only attribute to the Deity the production of natural evil. But the misery occasioned by an *earthquake* or by *disease*, is often as great as that produced by the bad passions of mankind; and it is altogether as difficult to account for the existence of natural as of moral evil. Indeed, the same account must be given of both.

administration of the world. Into the consideration of this subject we shall enter in the next section: but before proceeding to it, it may be proper to notice an objection, of minor importance, which is sometimes urged against the doctrine of providence, and which has been stated and answered in so excellent a manner by Dr. Price, in his admirable *Disquisition on Providence*, (p. 47,) that it seems a kind of injustice to the subject to employ any language but his own.

“ It has been often objected that it is impairing the beauty of the world, and representing it as a production more imperfect than any work of human art, to maintain that it cannot subsist of itself, or that it requires the hand of its Maker to be always at it to continue its motions and order.

“ The full answer to this objection is, that to every machine or perpetual movement for answering any particular purpose, there always belongs some *first mover*, some *weight* or *spring*, or other power which is continually acting upon it, and from which all its motions are derived: nor, without such power, is it possible to conceive of any such machine. The machine of the universe then, like all besides analogous to it, of which we have any idea, must have a *first mover*. Now it has been demonstrated that this

first mover cannot be matter itself. It follows, therefore, that this objection is so far from being of any force, that it leads us to the very conclusion which it is brought to overthrow.

“ The excellence of a machine by no means depends on its going properly of *itself*, for this is impossible ; but on the skill with which its various parts are adjusted to one another, and all its different effects are derived from the constant action of some power. What would indeed make a machine appear imperfect and deformed is, assigning a separate power to every distinct part, without allowing any place for mechanism ; and, in like manner, what would really make the frame of nature appear imperfect and deformed is, resolving phenomena too soon to the divine agency, or supposing it the *immediate* cause of every particular effect. But I have not been pleading for this, but only, that however far mechanism may be carried and the chain of causes extend in the material universe, to the Divine Power exerted continually in all places, every law and every effect and motion in it must be *at last* resolved. This is a conclusion which the modern improvements in natural philosophy have abundantly confirmed, and which some of the first and best philosophers have received ; nor can that philosophy be otherwise than little and contemptible which hides the

Deity from our views, which excludes him from the world, or does not terminate in the acknowledgement and adoration of him as the maker, preserver and ruler of all things.” *

* “The philosopher who overlooks the traces of an all-governing Deity in nature, contenting himself with the appearances of the material universe only, and the mechanical laws of motion, neglects what is most excellent; and prefers what is imperfect to what is supremely perfect, finitude to infinity, what is narrow and weak to what is unlimited and almighty, and what is perishing to what endures for ever.” Mr. Maclaurin’s Account of Sir Isaac Newton’s Discoveries, Book IV. Chap. 9, Sect. 1.

“Sir Isaac Newton thought it most unaccountable to exclude the Deity *only* out of the universe. It appeared to him much more just and reasonable to suppose that the whole chain of causes, or the several series of them, should centre in him as their source, and the whole system appear depending on him the only independent cause.” Ibid. Sect. 5.

SECTION III.

OF THE DESIGN OF THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT.

SINCE, then, there is a perfect superintendence of all events, they must be directed to some end. The Deity must have some wise and benevolent object to accomplish, as the result of his administration, and that object can be nothing but the final and perfect happiness of his intelligent creatures.

With this view, every thing must be planned, and to this end both the natural and the moral disorders which prevail must necessarily conduce. No one can believe that the Deity has chosen evil for its own sake. Were this the case, he would not be good: were he to cause the least degree of suffering, merely for the sake of producing pain, it would be utterly incompatible with benevolence. Evil in his hands, therefore, can only be the instrument of good. Nothing can have induced him to permit its existence, but the perception that under his administration it will terminate in the production of greater good than could have been enjoyed without it. When he created the world, and

first set in motion that train of events which have induced the actual state of things, he foresaw, that the partial evil which would arise, would terminate in the production of a larger sum of happiness, than could have been occasioned by its prevention. This being the case, that which would have militated against the perfection of his benevolence, would have been, not his permitting this evil, but his preventing it. That infinite wisdom and almighty power, *may* secure this result from the partial prevalence of evil, is at least possible, and it is probable, because the supposition is perfectly reasonable in itself, and accounts for, and reconciles every appearance.

If it be objected that, according to this opinion, he has himself done what he has forbidden to his creatures—he has done evil that good may come—it is replied, that the consequence may be admitted without hesitation, and that the principle which justifies it is obvious. To allow to such a being as man the liberty of doing evil, with a good design, would be certainly fatal, because he cannot possibly foresee the effect of his conduct, nor control events in such a manner as to *secure* his purpose. But God being possessed of perfect knowledge and almighty power, must be acquainted with the result of all possible combinations of circumstances, and must be able to

secure it against all miscarriage. It may, therefore, be supremely benevolent in him to do what it would be ruinous in man to attempt.

A similar account must be given of the moral disorders which prevail. When he placed man in such circumstances as he foresaw would be attended with the production and indulgence of evil passions, he must at the same time have foreseen, that, under his direction, these passions would produce, upon the whole, a greater sum of happiness than could have existed without them. The misery produced by sin is designed to answer the same benevolent purpose in the moral world, which the pain occasioned by hunger accomplishes in the animal. That the evil which results from the indulgence of the bad passions of mankind, *may* be made the means of eradicating them, and of training the mind to purity and benevolence; we have unquestionable proof in the daily events of life. This, then, which we see to be their effect with regard to some individuals at present, we contend will be their ultimate effect with respect to all mankind; that this is the final cause of their existence, and THAT THE GREAT DESIGN OF THE DEITY IS TO BRING ALL HIS INTELLIGENT OFFSPRING TO A STATE OF PURITY AND HAPPINESS.

This doctrine reconciles every difficulty, and

throws a glorious and cheering light on all the dispensations of the Deity. If it be true, every thing was planned by benevolence ; every thing is guided by benevolence ; every thing will terminate in benevolence, in exalted, eternal and ever-increasing felicity to all.

This doctrine, which represents the character of the Universal Parent in the most glorious and affecting light, and is benevolent in its tendency beyond any other opinion whatever, has been opposed with much violence, by some of the best of men ; and the worst have as loudly exclaimed against it. The prejudices of the good and the bad, of the pious and the profane, equally oppose it : yet there is no other truth which seems to be supported by so many *different* appearances, or by evidence derived from so many different sources. And since it throws so much light on the character and dispensations of the Deity, and is replete with such solid consolation, it may be useful to examine it somewhat at length ; first considering some of the arguments which appear to favour it, and next the objections which are usually brought to oppose it.

Because this doctrine maintains that mankind will finally be restored from sin, and from the present and future misery which is its consequence, to a state of purity and happiness, and that this will ultimately be the case with respect

to every individual of the human race, it is sometimes termed the doctrine of **UNIVERSAL RESTORATION**, which phrase, merely for the sake of brevity, we may hereafter frequently employ.

Some dispute, however, has arisen respecting the nature of the evidence which alone can establish this doctrine. It will be vain to proceed, therefore, before we have settled the principles upon which it will be proper to conduct our investigation. The nature of the evidence which will be deemed legitimate and satisfactory, must be determined before it will avail to adduce any.

Part Second.

INTRODUCTION.

OF THE *KIND* OF EVIDENCE WHICH IS NECESSARY TO ESTABLISH THE DOCTRINE OF THE ULTIMATE PURITY AND HAPPINESS OF ALL MANKIND.

SOME persons maintain, that the only evidence which can establish the doctrine of Universal Restoration, is the *direct* testimony of scripture. They seem to think that every proof, however solid in itself, if it cannot be adduced in the very words, or at least, if it be not borne out by the express testimony of revelation, is insufficient.

Others contend, that there is nothing in this doctrine which can prevent the application of such principles, or modes of reasoning to it, as are universally deemed just and satisfactory when applied to other subjects ; that if there be any doctrine of religion of which we can obtain a well-founded assurance, by considerations which do not derive their force from the express declarations of scripture, or which are altogether

independent of it, there can be no reason why the doctrine of Universal Restoration may not be one of these ; and that, if this opinion can be established upon a just and solid principle, it is sufficient, whether that principle be derived from revelation, or from any other source.

If the first of these classes will be content to say, “No evidence will be sufficient to establish this opinion, unless it harmonize with scripture,” there will remain no difference whatever between them ; and surely it is absurd to endeavour to establish a distinction where there ought to be the greatest union. Every principle, from whatever source it be derived, if it be just, must harmonize with scripture, and all scripture, if it be genuine, and rightly understood, must harmonize with every just principle.

Evidence founded upon a just principle is satisfactory, from whatever source it is derived : the only question which can affect the solidity of the conviction it produces is, whether it be just, not whether it have this or that origin. One single solid argument in favour of the doctrine of Universal Restoration deduced from the perfections of God, for example, is sufficient to establish its truth. One single solid argument deduced from scripture is likewise sufficient : but if a solid argument can be derived from both, the conviction produced will be more complete.

In a word, if this doctrine be true, it can be established both by reason and by revelation: if it be false, it can be refuted by both. .

It is for this reason that the evidence of both will be adduced in the following pages. The testimony of reason adds an unspeakable value to the declarations of scripture, not because established scripture wants the assistance of man's reason, but because if a doctrine be contrary to reason, we know that it is not the word of God. It betrays an ignorance of the nature of both to pay no regard to a clear deduction of reason, because it is not revelation, or to maintain that what is contrary to reason is revealed in scripture, for truth cannot be inconsistent with reason, nor can scripture and truth clash.

In adducing the evidence in favour of the doctrine of the ultimate restoration of all mankind to purity and happiness, it may be proper to begin with the statement of that which is derived from considerations which have no direct reference to the *positive* declarations of scripture: then to examine the objections which are urged against it, whether derived from scripture or from other sources, and in the last place to state those express declarations of scripture which appear to establish it.

If it can be shewn that all the perfections of the Deity, that the nature of man and the nature

and design of punishment, are completely in favour of this doctrine—that the objections which have been urged against it, whether derived from reason or revelation, may be satisfactorily removed—that the arguments which have been supposed to establish contrary opinions are not conclusive—and that the Scriptures contain some passages which can have no meaning unless this doctrine be supposed; others which cannot be true unless it be admitted; and others which seem directly and positively to favour it—this would seem sufficient to convince every candid inquirer of its truth, because, in this case, the evidence in its favour will not only be direct and positive, but will be founded also on the most firm and solid principles, and there will be no evidence against it. It will be the object of the following pages to establish, in order, each of the above positions.

It may be proper however to observe, that arguments may in reality be derived from scripture, which do not at first sight appear to be so. Revelation has poured so much light upon the mind, and has led us into such a just way of reasoning concerning God, concerning his design in creation and his government of the world, that our conceptions and arguments, even when they do not appear at all to depend upon this heavenly guide, attain a degree of sublimity and

truth to which they would never have arrived without it ; and we often appear to be following the deductions of our own understanding, when in reality we are only repeating in other words, and with other associations, the declarations of scripture. Why, without any direct or apparent dependence upon revelation, are we now able to form such pure and exalted conceptions of the Supreme Being, as were totally unknown to the great sages of antiquity ? It is because revelation has furnished us with the light which has conducted us to these noble and just conclusions. Of our views of the perfections of the Deity, of his dispensations to his creatures, of his works and of his ways, in a word, of all the principles upon which the subsequent reasoning is founded, this observation is peculiarly true. Although, therefore, the arguments contained in the second part of this work, may not appear, at first sight, to be founded upon the Scriptures, it is not just to conclude that they have a different origin : for *in so far as they are true*, they must be, either directly or indirectly, derived from it, since there is no reason to believe that they could have been formed by any mind which had not been illumined by this divine light.

OF THE EVIDENCE IN FAVOUR OF THE FINAL
RESTORATION OF ALL MANKIND TO PURITY
AND HAPPINESS, DISTINCT FROM THAT AFF-
FORDED BY THE EXPRESS DECLARATIONS
OF SCRIPTURE.

THE evidence in favour of the doctrine of Universal Restoration distinct from that afforded by the express declarations of scripture, may be arranged under three heads ; namely, that which is deducible from the perfections of God—from the nature of man—and from the nature and design of punishment.

It is proper to say, that the arguments adduced under each of these particulars, are distinct from those afforded by the express declarations of scripture ; because how much soever they may really depend upon the light of Revelation, (and for the reason already assigned they may depend upon it in a very great degree,) yet they are framed without any direct reference to it, and seem in general to be derived from the nature of things. Reasoning of this kind is peculiarly satisfactory ; and if the *positive* declarations of scripture can be shewn to coincide with it, to include it and to be founded upon it, it must produce a conviction as strong as can be effected by any thing which is not an object of sense, or which cannot be proved upon the principles of geometry.

CHAPTER I.

OF THE ARGUMENT IN FAVOUR OF THE DOCTRINE
OF UNIVERSAL RESTORATION, DERIVED FROM
THE PERFECTIONS OF GOD.

SECTION I.

OF THE GOODNESS OF GOD.

WERE it assumed that he who gave us existence, and bestowed upon us all things richly to enjoy, is a being of infinite goodness, it would be only taking for granted what all Christians, and even all Theists allow. It may be proper, however, to state briefly the evidence of the perfect benignity of the Universal Parent.

Because the phenomena of nature cannot be accounted for without the supposition of a self-existent being, the original cause of all things, we conclude that such a being exists, and that since he is the cause of all other things and beings, he must be independent of them. Because he who could create such a world as this, must be able to do any thing which is not in itself a contradiction, we infer that his power is without limits. Because the exhibitions of

wisdom in every part of nature with which we are acquainted, surpass all assignable limits, and because we cannot but conceive that the intelligence which is displayed in the constitution of the world, is adequate to the performance of any thing which is in its own nature possible, we conclude also that his wisdom is infinite. From these principles, his goodness follows as a necessary consequence.

For the original cause of all things being absolutely independent, being infinite in power and wisdom, must be good, since evil is the result of want, weakness or error. But he who is infinite in power can have no want; neither can he have any weakness; and he who created all things, and gave them the relations they possess, cannot but know them perfectly, and therefore must be incapable of error.

That evil can arise from no other sources than those which have been mentioned, will appear evident from considering the origin of any form of it with which we are acquainted. Whence, for example, arise envy, malice, hatred, injustice? Envy is the malicious coveting of a good possessed by another: something is desired which cannot be attained; he then who has it in his power to obtain all good, must be incapable of envy. Injustice is the withholding of a good, real or supposed, from another whose right it is;

he who has it in his power to obtain all good, must therefore be incapable of injustice: and the same may be said of every description of moral evil whatever.

If an intelligent being perceive perfectly the true relation of all things to each other, so as to be incapable of mistake, and if at the same time he have the whole of possibility in his power, he must in the nature of things be incapable of evil: because he cannot commit evil through ignorance, and there can be nothing to induce him to act with an evil design. This, then, is exactly the idea which we form of the Supreme Intelligence.

If this deduction of the goodness of God, from the other essential attributes of his nature, be just, it will be confirmed by the appearances of his works. What he has done, will satisfy us that we are right in our conception of what he is.

In endeavouring to ascertain from his works whether or not the Deity be benevolent, we must conduct our investigation in the same manner as when we endeavour to discover his other perfections. Because in the objects around us we perceive so many marks of design, such various and exquisite contrivance, we conclude that their author is intelligent. In like manner, if it appear that this design is good design, that this contrivance ministers, not only to convenience

but to enjoyment, it will follow that its author is good.

Now there are two facts, of the certainty of which no one who examines the state of the animal creation can doubt, which place the goodness of the Creator beyond all question. The first is, that pleasure is imparted to animal sensations, when no cause can be assigned for it but the gratification of the animal: the second is, that there is more happiness than misery in the world.*

The first, if it can be clearly proved, affords a conviction, the certainty of which cannot be exceeded by any kind of evidence whatever, not even by that which we derive from geometry or from sense. The determination to create an animal, supposes a determination to endow it with all the faculties which are necessary to its existence. These faculties, therefore, however multiplied, beautiful or exquisite, cannot prove the goodness of the Creator, because being necessary to the existence of the animal, they must have formed a part of any design to create, whether good or malevolent. But if these faculties be so constituted that they not only give

* Each of these positions has been stated and illustrated, with admirable force and beauty, by Paley, in his *Natural Theology*.

existence, but make that existence happy ; if in general they cannot be exercised without affording enjoyment as well as life, then there is not only design, but good design : then it is evident that the Creator not only meant to give existence, but to make that existence a blessing.

With all the animal functions then this is the case. They all minister to enjoyment, while they sustain the mysterious principle of life. There is not a single exception. There is not one animal function, the common and natural exercise of which is painful : there is not one whose natural exercise is not productive of pleasure.* Whence could this possibly happen, but from the goodness of the Creator ?

He who is infinite in power might have so constituted an animal, as to make the exercise of every function which is necessary to its existence, productive of exquisite suffering ; and had his nature been malignant, and his design in creation been to gratify a malignant disposition, he would certainly have done so. Constituted as animals at present are, it is necessary to the continuance of their life that they should eat. The act of eating might have been made productive of ex-

* Indeed the very application of the term natural, is a decisive proof of the goodness of the Deity. When the functions of an animal are so exercised as to afford it vigour, ease and enjoyment, we say it is in a natural state.

quisite misery, and the animal have been infallibly impelled to it, by making the pain of hunger still greater than that of eating. Here then, was an opportunity of diffusing over the whole animal creation, a source of continual torment. But instead of this, the act is made highly pleasurable, and thus becomes the source of continual gratification. How can this be accounted for, but upon the supposition that he who had the diffusion of both equally in his power, and who chose to diffuse happiness rather than misery, is good?

Constituted as animals at present are, and placed amidst such objects as those which surround them, it was necessary that they should have the senses of sight and of touch. Now the eye might have been so constructed, as to receive from every object the same kind of impression as is felt when it is cast upon any thing that is monstrous. The sense of touch might have been so formed, as to impart upon the contact of every object, a sensation similar to that which is felt when the surface of the body is pierced with thorns; and as the body must always be in contact with some external object, this torment might have been experienced during every moment of existence. Why then is not this the case? Why, on the contrary, do we continually receive the most exquisite gratifi-

cation from all our senses? It can be resolved into nothing but the pure benignity of the Creator.

This annexation of pleasure to the exercise of animal functions, when that pleasure is not at all necessary to animal existence, is a decisive proof of the goodness of the Deity: for it is to produce happiness without doing any thing else: it is to rest in it as an object and end: it is to do this in proportion as happiness prevails beyond what is necessary to life; that is, in proportion as it prevails at all. But to produce happiness for its own sake, to rest in it as an object and end, is of the very essence of benevolence, and pure and perfect benevolence can do no more. Neither can such a provision for enjoyment possibly arise from any thing but benevolence; for an evil nature must necessarily be incapable of it. In proportion then as happiness is diffused over the creation of God, is the plenitude of the proof that he is good.

And this leads to the second fact upon which the benevolence of the Deity is founded; namely, that there is much more happiness than misery through the whole of the animal creation. Were it not so, we should see all animals tired of life, eager to throw off the burthen of existence, and watchful of an opportunity to reduce themselves to an unconscious state. But the reverse is

always the fact. What exertions do they not all make to prolong their being ! How are all their faculties continually upon the stretch to preserve themselves from danger ! How various, how wonderful are their resources ; how tenaciously do they cling to existence even to its latest moment !

What a scene of enjoyment does the tribe of insects, of fishes, of all the inferior animals, exhibit from the beginning to the end of life ! Those whose conformation fits them for motion, how delighted are they to run, to fly, to leap, to swim ; how incessantly are they gliding from place to place, without any apparent object, deriving gratification from the very exercise of their limbs ! Those which delight in rest, how happy are they in the loneliness of the shade ; in basking in the sun or grazing in the field ! In a summer evening how exhilarating is it to the spirits, to leave for a while the busy hum of men, and wander beneath the clear blue sky, and amidst Nature's own works ! What millions of happy creatures every where surround us ! Above, around, beneath, every thing is in motion and every thing is happy. The air, the earth, the water, every tree, and every shrub, and every little blade of grass teems with delighted existence. Scarcely can we fix our eye upon a single spot in which there is not life and happiness !

Which of the millions of creatures that press upon our sight is in pain? Which of them does not by every movement declare, that to the full measure of its capacity, it is happy?

This felicity seems to belong to, and to characterize animal life, during the whole period of its existence. It is exempt from almost all the sources of infelicity which impair the happiness of man, and fill him with gloom and sorrow. It is not subject to much disease, and that which accident or natural decay does induce, is of short continuance. It spends the measure of its days in sportiveness and pleasure, and when its last moment comes, it arrives without giving any previous indication of its approach, and all consciousness ceases suddenly, and with little pain.

Now when we consider the extent and the *fulness* of creation; when we remember that it is scarcely possible, as has just been observed, to fix our eye upon the minutest spot where there is not life; when, under this impression, we endeavour to calculate how many creatures there sometimes are upon one single leaf; upon all the leaves on one tree; how many, therefore, in one field; how many in all the fields which our eye can take in at a single glance; how many in all the fields in one country; when we remember that each of these creatures is in a state of positive happiness, and then endeavour

to calculate the collective sum of enjoyment in one country, can we help exclaiming, what an effort of benevolence was creation! Can we doubt the goodness of its Author!

It is by fixing the attention on the squalid and disgusting objects, which we sometimes meet in the streets of a crowded city, and by considering these as a specimen of what life in general is, that a person is commonly first led to question the benevolence of the great Parent of all things. No one who frequently inhales the sweets with which Nature rewards her visitor, or contemplates the objects which she presents to instruct and delight him, can entertain such a doubt. And even in man, contemplated as he is in the most unfavourable situation in which it is possible to view him, in a large and crowded city, it is still true that his happiness exceeds his misery. For those "squalid and disgusting objects" which so shock and dissatisfy us, are few indeed compared with the healthful and the happy: neither were they always thus miserable, nor probably will they long remain so; and often they are not so unhappy as they seem, and as they endeavour to appear.

The fact is, that there is much less evil in the world, and much less misery among human beings, than we are accustomed to imagine. Many persons can recount every period of their

life in which they were unhappy : others can scarcely mention a single misfortune which ever befel them ; and those on whom the afflictive dispensations of heaven have fallen more heavily, how distinctly are these days of visitation marked in their memory ! But can they recount with equal facility their days of happiness ? Can they number up, not their moments or their hours, but even their weeks and their months of enjoyment ? They have forgotten the periods of their happiness : they remember those only in which they were miserable. The reason is obvious. The one is a common occurrence, the usual and ordinary state of things : the other is a singular event : it happened only at distant intervals, was quite out of the general course, and therefore the mind distinctly marked, and the memory retains it. We notice an eclipse, we talk of it, but we do not so much observe the daily splendour of the sun. We may enjoy its light and heat many months without thinking of it, and the reason is the same in both cases. We observe what is unusual, but that which is familiar makes no remarkable impression. This consideration alone is sufficient to convince us that we enjoy infinitely more than we suffer.

But we are able to go much farther, and to affirm, that even in those periods, few as they are, in which we were unhappy, and which we have

been accustomed to consider as distinguished by misery alone, we really suffered very little compared with what we have been in the habit of believing. We are seized, let us suppose, with an acute disease. It preys upon our vitals, it prostrates our strength, it reduces us to the verge of the grave. But what disease is there which does not intermit; which has not its intervals of ease; nay, which has not more intervals of each than paroxysms of pain? When we labour under a disease, we are accustomed to speak as though we were in pain through the whole of its duration; but this is by no means the case. Many diseases of a most afflictive nature, are characterized by an almost total and very protracted remission; and those which assume a more continued form, are by no means without their intervals of ease. An unusual debility, indeed, is always present; the disease does not relinquish its hold of the frame, but neither does it always exert its power to afflict, and even when it does so, and the soul is filled with anguish, the paroxysm is soon over, and quiet and ease succeed. Nor ought it to be forgotten, that these intervals are often amongst the sweetest and most valued moments of existence, the preceding pain giving a keen and exquisite relish for enjoyment. And it ought to be remembered too, that the thoughts with which the mind often amuses itself in sick-

ness, the hope of recovery, and the attentions of kind and tender friends, greatly lessen and counterbalance the actual sum of misery endured. Indeed, disease, taking the most extensive view of it, seems more destructive to the vital principle, than to the actual enjoyment of the sentient being; and this observation will be confirmed by considering, that the first is the final cause of disease, the second is only an accidental consequence.

These observations may be applied with equal justice to the afflictions of the mind. Whatever be the nature or the magnitude of the calamity with which it is visited, it is never constantly, nor even for a long period together, under its influence. Whoever will consider the conduct of his mind under the severest misfortune, will soon be convinced of this fact. He will perceive that a thousand objects came in to attract his attention from the subject of his sorrow, of which he was unconscious at the time, and to which he yielded without knowing it: that the mind has numberless sources of pleasure to which in its most gloomy hour it soon spontaneously betakes itself, and that it is impossible to chain it down to perpetual afflictive thought. If he will carefully compare the number of minutes in which he is sure that his attention was fixed on the subject of his misfortune, with those in

which he is satisfied that it was occupied with other objects, he will be so far from believing he contemplated it incessantly, that he will wonder he thought of it so little. At particular periods, indeed, he dwelt upon and felt all his wretchedness: these periods, perhaps, are distinctly marked in his memory, but he has forgotten the hours of abstraction from his sorrow which intervened, and for the same reason that he has forgotten so many of his peaceful days. Now the bestowment of this constitution of mind is of the very essence of benevolence. Language cannot express the kindness there is in it, nor are we at all able to estimate the relief we owe to it from the afflictions which befall us.

Thus, then, it appears, that pleasure not only preponderates over pain, but that this is the case even in the most unhappy periods of existence. And in the ordinary circumstances of life, how great is that pleasure; how various, how exquisite, how far surpassing our ability to estimate! Contemplate a person placed in the ordinary circumstances of life; suppose him addicted to no particular vice, nor practising any exemplary virtue; neither highly favoured with the gifts of understanding nor of fortune; of what pleasure is he capable, and what pleasure does he actually enjoy? What gratification does he every hour receive from his different senses;

from the faculties of his mind; from his social affections; from the relations which connect him with his fellow-beings, those relations so dear and sacred, which constitute him a father, a husband, a brother, a friend?

But suppose him not only addicted to no vice, but highly virtuous, to feel a deep sense of his obligations to the Supreme Being, to love him, to take a sincere pleasure in learning and obeying his laws, and in preparing to meet him in those blissful regions, where he will enjoy such superior displays of his perfections and glory: suppose him to consider all his fellow-creatures as brethren, to feel for them a real and fraternal affection, and to delight in doing them all the good offices in his power: in a word, suppose him to be a sincere disciple of Jesus Christ, what exquisite felicity does such a being enjoy! How sublime in its nature! How immortal in its duration! How nearly does it assimilate him to the Supreme Being himself! Who can believe that such faculties and such happiness can be bounded by the current of time, or swept away amidst the low and frivolous objects which it is bearing to eternal oblivion; that they are imparted only to give dignity to the triumph of death, and importance to the spoil of the grave, and that the very benignity of their author is questionable?

In a word, let every human being, whatever be his fortune or condition, look into his own heart, and ask whether He who made him what he is, and placed him where he is, and gave him what he has, be not good? If he answer in the affirmative, he determines the question respecting the divine benignity; if he answer in the negative, let him reflect upon the words of the Grecian sage—**KNOW THYSELF!**

There is nothing which is more apt to excite a doubt of the perfect goodness of the Deity than the consequences which sometimes result from the dependence of men upon each other. How completely does the welfare of an individual, of a family, of a city, of an empire often depend on the will of a single man: how unqualified does he seem to hold the momentous trust: how dreadfully does he abuse it! My comfort at present, my well-being hereafter, my destiny through ages of ages in a future world depend in an incalculable degree on the will of my fellow-beings. It is they who determine, in a great measure, whether I am ignorant or wise, virtuous or vicious, healthful or diseased, wealthy or indigent, encircled with splendour or doomed to wretchedness and want. On their decision hangs my destiny. They decide against my happiness. They plunge me into the depths of

woe. I struggle against the misfortunes which envelop me. It is vain. I need a friendly aid which is sternly, constantly denied.

Look at that haggard wretch. It is want which enfeebles his step; it is misery which fixes his eye upon the earth; it is the silent suffering of the wife of his bosom, it is the cry of his perishing children which darken his countenance with despair. See, he ventures to lift his eye supplicating help: it rests on one whom wealth has loaded with its treasures; it finds no pity there: with the haughtiness of scorn he is repulsed.

Look at that tyrant's slave. His mind is brutalized; his soul is servile; like the ox he toils, and instead of that fine capacity which approximates him to his Creator, and those delightful affections which make benevolence in love with humanity, he differs from the ox only in being less able to perform the drudgery assigned him, and in having occasionally a faint perception of his degradation. Why is this permitted? How can it be reconciled with the doctrine that we have all one Father who regards us with equal love, and who dispenses his blessings to all his creatures with perfect impartiality?

If it be an indubitable truth that God has a right to make man's happiness dependent upon

whatever conditions he pleases, provided the enjoyment of every individual exceed his suffering, this single observation ought to be sufficient to reconcile us to every difficulty of this kind. And that happiness does greatly preponderate even in the lot of the most unhappy of the human race has already been clearly shewn. If this must be admitted as an indisputable truth, then the objection which is here urged against the divine goodness is, not that God has not made his creatures happy, but that he has not made them more happy: an objection, the principle of which it is impossible even for omnipotence itself to satisfy: for were that happiness immeasurably increased, it might still be asked—Why is it not greater? And the same question might be repeated to infinity. The reason, therefore, why we have no right to murmur at our lot though it be far less desirable than that of many of our fellow-creatures, is the same as must be assigned why the worm has no right to complain that it is not a man, nor the man that he is not an angel. All cannot be highest and best: there must be degrees of capacity and happiness, and nothing is certain, if it be not certain, that within the limit of a final prevalence of enjoyment over suffering, the Creator may assign whatever degree of pleasure he judges fit, from that of

the minutest and the meanest insect, to that of the intelligence which approaches nearest his throne and is encircled with his own glory.

But in the appointment of this dependence of men upon each other, of some of the consequences of which we are so apt to complain, we can even now discern the greatest wisdom and benevolence. It is the evident intention of the Deity that the chief blessings enjoyed by human beings should be communicated immediately by human beings: and this plan gives rise to the best feelings of our nature and forms the grandest characters which ennoble it. Even the disorders which we most bitterly lament have such an influence in producing our highest virtues, that, so far as we can see, these virtues could not subsist without them. Were there no want there could be no benevolence; were there no selfishness there could be no generosity; were there no violence there could be no forbearance; were there no injustice there could be no forgiveness; no trust in God; no resignation to his will. So that the world with all its evils is the school in which the highest and noblest excellencies are produced and fostered.

The misery which is sometimes the consequence of this plan, is the result of the bad passions of men, and their existence must be accounted for on the same principle as the

admission of natural and moral evil in general. He who has permitted them holds them in his own hands; directs and controls them, and will make them subservient to the production of a degree of excellence and happiness which could not have been so well secured without them. As soon as they have accomplished their work he will destroy them for ever: and in the mean time he will allow them to occasion no suffering which is inconsistent with perfect rectitude: every degree of wrong feeling which they might tend to produce he will assuredly counteract: of this we may be certain on the principles which have been already established; for it is impossible to believe that he has assigned (as we have seen he has) to every particle of matter its appointed place, and that he constantly superintends all its changes, and yet that he has neglected the feelings of the mind; that no atom can move without him, and yet that the human soul can suffer without him.

In a word, there are two accounts to be given of the apparent want of goodness in the divine dispensations: it may arise from the reality of that appearance; or from our ignorance, confined views and disadvantageous situation for observing the whole of the divine economy. “It may be owing either to an actual want of goodness or to the infinity and unfathomableness of it.

The first of these accounts contradicts numberless phenomena of nature ; is inconsistent with the perfection apparent in the general frame of the world, and opposes our most reasonable apprehensions concerning the nature and attributes of the First Cause. The latter account is in the highest degree easy, natural and obvious. It is suggested to us by what we have experienced in similar instances, and agreeable to what, from the reason of the thing, we might have foreseen must have happened to such creatures as we are, in considering such a scheme as that of nature. Can we then doubt to which of these accounts we shall give the preference? Is it reasonable to suffer our conviction of a fact, for which we have good evidence, to be influenced by appearances which may as well be consistent as inconsistent with it ; nay, by appearances which, on the supposition of its truth, we must beforehand have expected?''*

Still, however, the great objection may be urged that misery does exist, and that if the diffusion of happiness prove the Deity to be good, his permission of misery proves him to be evil. What has been said respecting the

* Four Dissertations, &c. By Richard Price, D.D. F.R.S. p. 105.

prevalence of happiness over misery, is itself sufficient to remove this objection: but a still more full and complete answer to it would be furnished by a recapitulation of what has been stated relative to the design of the Deity in the permission of evil. It is the means which he employs to produce more good than could have been enjoyed without it, and therefore its existence is not only consistent with goodness, but as much a part of it as the diffusion of happiness.

That evil actually is thus the instrument of good, we see in numberless cases. We are excited to the fulfilment of almost all our animal functions by pain. We are preserved from a thousand dangers by pain. We are reclaimed from error and saved from vice by pain. In all these instances it is obvious, that the existence of pain is not only not a proof of evil in the being who causes it, but a direct demonstration of his goodness, since it is the instrument he employs to produce incalculable benefit; benefit, which so far as we can see, could not have been produced at all, or could not have been so well secured by any other means.

Let us then observe the exact state of the case. We can prove in the most satisfactory manner that the Deity is good, because we can prove that he has imparted pleasure, where it

can answer no other purpose than that of promoting the happiness of its recipient: that he has therefore rested in the production of happiness as an object and end. One such case is an absolute demonstration of his goodness. On the other hand, it cannot be proved that pain is ever occasioned where no purpose is answered by it, but the misery of the sufferer. Not a single example can be found in all nature, from which it can be proved that pain is rested in as an object and end: but numberless instances can be adduced, from which it can be demonstrated that it is the means of producing good; and the utmost which can be said on the opposite side is, that there are particular cases of such a nature, that we cannot explain *how* they will terminate in good: but even with respect to these, no one can shew that they will end in evil; no one can render it even probable; but the probability produced by all which we really know, is altogether against the conclusion. Although we are ignorant of the exact means by which in these cases good is promoted, yet we are equally ignorant of the exact means by which a thousand things are brought to pass, which we are certain happen: and at all events, our ignorance cannot affect our knowledge; our ignorance of what we do *not* know, cannot bring doubt upon what we *do* know; nor can we,

without manifest absurdity conclude, that the Deity is not good, merely because we are ignorant of the mode in which, in particular cases, he chooses to accomplish the purposes of benevolence. Belief is founded upon evidence, not upon ignorance ; but the notion that the Deity is not perfectly good is founded altogether upon our ignorance. Evidence is completely against it : evidence is wholly in favour of his perfect benignity ; evidence amounting to absolute demonstration.

In a word, he who believes in the existence of the Deity at all, must admit, from every conception which he can form of his nature, and from every instance which he can contemplate of his works, that he is possessed of perfect goodness.

Let us then suppose that he is really distinguished by these attributes ; that he is self-existent, independent, infinitely powerful, wise and good, and that he determines to call into existence millions of beings, endowed with such a capacity of happiness, and furnished with such faculties, as distinguish men. What could induce in him such a determination ? By the supposition, he is infinitely powerful, wise and good : he must therefore be infinitely happy, because infinite power, wisdom and goodness must render him self-sufficient : must supply

him, that is, with all the means of happiness, whatever they may be, and at the same time exclude every thing which is incompatible with perfect felicity.

Being, then, infinitely powerful, wise, good and happy, what, it is again demanded, could determine him to call into existence a world of percipient and reasonable creatures? Could it be weakness? That is impossible; for by the supposition, he is infinitely powerful. Could it be caprice? That too is impossible; for by the supposition, he is infinitely wise, and therefore must act not only with some design, but with wise design. Could it be to occasion misery? That also is impossible: for to suppose that a being who is infinitely wise, good and happy, can purpose the production of misery for its own sake, is a contradiction. What then could he design? It is impossible to suppose that he could have any other object in view than the bestowment of happiness; the communication to the creatures his wisdom might form, according to the capacities with which that wisdom might endow them, of a portion of his own felicity.

This is a motive sufficient to induce him to execute the great and wonderful work of creation: no other motive of which it is possible to conceive is adequate. The motive which is

often ascribed to him, that he created the world in order to display his own glory, exactly coincides with that which is here assigned: for the glory of God can be nothing but the happiness of his creatures.

SECTION II.

OF THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE DIVINE BENEVOLENCE.

FOR the same reason that the Deity designed to make one human being happy, he must have purposed to bestow felicity ultimately upon all. For if there be a single individual whom he created without this design, since he must still have had some design, it must be different from that which we have already shewn to be the only one which he could have had in view.

In reality, his purpose with respect to every individual, must have been either to make him happy or miserable. If it were not to make him happy, it must have been to make him miserable: but to suppose that he purposed to make any one miserable ultimately and upon the whole, is to suppose, that he purposed the production of misery for its own sake, which has already been shewn to be absurd.

If every principle of the human understanding, revolts at the conclusion that he is partial and capricious in his kindness, and has designed to make some individuals happy and others miserable, it is equally opposed by all the appearances

in nature. It is refuted by every object to which we can direct our attention. The sun, in the brightness of his glory, diffuses light and joy through all the nations of the earth. He has no favourite to bless. He regards not in his course the little distinctions which prevail among mankind. He shines not on the lands of the great, forgetting to pour his beams on the lowly spot of the peasant. He lights up the Indies with a burning glow; he smiles upon the nations of Europe with a milder beam; and he shines upon the hoary path of the Laplander amidst his mountains of eternal snow. “The Lord is good to all. He causes his sun to shine upon the evil and the good.”

The cloud, bearing in its bosom riches and fertility, pours its blessings upon every field, without regarding the name or rank of its owner. “The Lord visiteth the earth with his goodness; he watereth it with the dew of heaven; he maketh it soft with showers: he blesseth the springing thereof.”

No where in nature are there traces of a partial God. Some inequalities indeed appear in the distribution of his bounty, but this must necessarily be the case if any variety exist: for in the nature of things there can be no variety, unless some objects appear higher and some lower, some better and some worse than others.

But how low in capacity, how dark and grovelling in apprehension, how little capable of estimating the benignity of the author of its mercies, must be that mind which dreams that the Deity is partial, because by diffusing every where a countless variety of blessings, he has adopted the means of producing the greatest sum of enjoyment!

The great things which make us what we are, which minister to the primary wants, and which lie at the foundation of the happiness of all animal and intelligent natures, are always and every where the same. Life itself is the same, wherever that wondrous power which imparts to a mass of clay the amazing properties of sensation and intelligence, has operated. Wherever a vital fluid circulates, from the insect whose bulk we are unable to discern by the best artificial aids, up to the highest of the human race, it flows only to diffuse enjoyment. To all, indeed, it does not impart an equal sum of happiness, because it could not do so, unless every object in nature were exactly alike; but to all it is the source of pleasure. Simple existence is a blessing; simply to be, is happiness. And this is the case with every race of animals, and with every individual of every race. The Deity has made no distinction in the *nature* of the existence which he has given to his creatures. He

has not made the act of existing pleasurable in one and painful in another; he has made it the same in all, and in all he has made it happy. No reason can be assigned for this, but that he is good to all.

Every appearance of partiality vanishes from all his great and substantial gifts. It is only in what is justly termed the adventitious circumstances which attend his bounties, that the least indication of it can be supposed to exist; yet narrow and contracted minds confine their attention to these adventitious circumstances alone, and hence conclude that he is partial in the distribution of his goodness; while all his great and fundamental blessings are so universally and equally diffused, that they demonstrate him to be a being of perfect benevolence. Now we ought to reason from the great to the little, not from the little to the great. We ought to say, because in every thing of primary importance, there is no appearance of partiality, therefore there can be really none, although in lesser things there is some inequality in the distribution of the absolute sum of enjoyment: not because there is some inequality in lesser things, therefore there must be partiality, although there is no indication of it in any thing of real moment.

If to this consideration be added what has already been established, that even the most

wretched of the human race enjoy a great preponderance of happiness, it will furnish another decisive proof that the Deity designed to make all his creatures happy.

If we look inward on ourselves, and consider all the parts which minister to the perfection and happiness of our nature, whether animal or intellectual, we shall find a farther confirmation of this great truth. Did not one God fashion us? Has he given to any one of us more members than to another? Has he superadded to one in the use of an organ, an exquisite degree of enjoyment, which he has denied to another? Are not all our organs the same, adapted to the same uses, and productive of the same gratifications? Has he not given to all the same number of senses, and made them the source of similar intelligence and pleasure? *

Indeed, no one can imagine, that in the formation and government of the world the Deity has been influenced by partiality, without entertaining the most low and puerile conceptions of

* If those who are born blind or deaf, or are deprived of any sense by accident, should be considered exceptions to this general rule, it is still only the exception of one case in many thousands; and the loss even where it does take place, is very generally compensated, in no inconsiderable degree, by the acuteness which the remaining senses acquire.

his nature and conduct. When of one piece of clay he made an animal without reason, and of another a man, he felt no more partiality towards the clay which formed the man, than towards that of which he constructed the animal without reason. But he determined to impart enjoyment to an infinite variety of organized and sensitive creatures. It was necessary to the perfection of his plan that there should be an animal without reason ; it was necessary that there should be a man. He therefore gave to each the properties it possesses.

Now while we suppose that he was not influenced by partiality in the distinction which he has made between the different genera of creatures, shall we imagine that when he proceeded to form the species under these genera, and still more the individuals under these species, he on a sudden changed the principle of his conduct, and acted solely with a view to gratify a capricious fondness for one individual, and aversion to another ; that classes and orders, those great lines of demarkation between different creatures, do not proceed from partiality, but that the slight shades of difference which distinguish individuals from individuals do ? Can any conception be more puerile ? Every blessing diffused over the creation, which is of great or

permanent importance, is given not to individuals, but to the species. This is the invariable law of nature.

But while the universality of the divine benevolence will be readily admitted, with respect to the blessings which have been mentioned, many persons believe that the Deity acts upon a totally different principle with regard to the distribution of moral and spiritual favour, and that he invariably confines the bestowment of this description of good to a few chosen individuals. The most popular systems of religion which prevail in the present age are founded upon this opinion. But if it be a fact that there is no partiality in the primary and essential gift of existence, in life considered as a whole, in the minor properties and felicities of our nature, in our senses, in our intellectual and moral faculties, and in the gratification of which they are respectively the source; if all these great blessings agree in this important circumstance, that they are instruments of enjoyment to all, and that the happiness they actually do impart is universal, it must follow that there is no partiality in the distribution of moral and spiritual good. For why is this spiritual good imparted to any? Why is it superadded to the merely animal and intellectual nature of a single individual? It must be to

perfect its possessor, and to make him susceptible of a greater sum of enjoyment.

We perceive that in addition to mere animal existence, man is endowed with organs which constitute him the most perfect of the creatures which inhabit the earth. Why were these organs given him? Without doubt that he might enjoy a higher degree of happiness than the creatures beneath him. To the organs which constitute him a mere (though a very perfect) animal, there are then superadded others which impart to him a rational and moral nature, with a view that he may enjoy a more perfect happiness; but besides all these, other properties are added, which exalt him still higher in the scale of creation; properties, for the reception of which the former only qualify him; properties which make him capable of loving his Maker, and of enjoying him for ever. Why is he endowed with these? Certainly that he may enjoy a more perfect happiness than he could attain without them. Must not this reason then induce the author of these invaluable blessings to bestow them upon the race as well as upon a few individuals?

Let the mind dwell for a moment upon what it is it really supposes when it imagines that these properties are given to some and denied to others. The difference between the man who is capable of perceiving the excellence of the

great and perfect Being who made him, of loving him, and of conforming to his character, and the man who not only is not endowed with this capacity, but is impelled by the principles of his nature to hate the Deity, is infinitely greater than the difference between a worm and the most exalted of the human race. For if before the religious faculty begins to be developed, there appear no remarkable distinction between them, let them be observed after this principle has been called into action, and has operated for some time. It will then be seen that in their conceptions, their occupations, and their enjoyments, they totally differ from each other, that they have hardly any thing in common, that there is as great a distinction between them as between the insect which grovels in the dust, and the man who first measured the distances of the stars, and taught us the laws by which the universe is governed. Let the mind look forward to eternity, and suppose (as always is supposed) that both will progressively advance, each in his career, through the ages of an endless duration, how immeasurable does the distance between them then become !

Now the difference which is here supposed between two beings of the same species is never found to exist. There is nothing similar to it in the whole range of that part of the creation with

which we are acquainted. Differences between individuals of the same species are observable, but there is nothing approaching the immensity of this inconceivable distinction. Whatever differences prevail are those of *degree*, not of *kind*. Every individual of the same species has every essential property the same as his fellows ; but here a property infinitely more important in its consequences than the addition of a new sense would be, is given to one and denied to another. This looks not like the work of the Deity. It is a vast and sudden chasm in a plan of wondrous order, for which no preparation is made, to which we are led by no preparatory steps, for which nothing can account, and which nothing can reconcile. It bears upon it traces of the imperfect and short-sighted contrivance of man ; it is contradicted by all which we feel and know of the works of God, and it ought to be driven from the mind of every rational being, that the fair creation of the Deity may no longer be falsified by the deceptive medium through which it is viewed, and that our Maker may not be charged with injustice because our eye is evil !

SECTION III.

OF THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF FRUSTRATING
THE DESIGN OF THE DEITY.

IF the Deity created all men with a design to make them happy, their ultimate felicity is certain ; for if a being propose to himself the accomplishment of a design, he will perform it, unless some motive arise from within to induce him to change it, or some circumstance arise from without to oblige him to change it. Nothing can explain the failure of his purpose, unless it be supposed, either that he has voluntarily changed it, or has been forced by some superior power to abandon it.

If the Deity voluntarily change his plan, it must be for the better or for the worse. If for the better, the original plan must have been imperfect ; if for the worse, since he knows all things perfectly, and must, therefore, foresee the consequence, it follows, that what he perceives to be a good plan is relinquished for one which he knows to be bad : but the supposition that a wise and good being would thus act, is impossible.

If on the contrary, he has been forced to

change his plan, that which obliged him to do so must be stronger than he ; for no being will permit his design to be frustrated by a power which is weaker than himself. Whatever therefore it be which frustrates the design of the Deity, must prove itself to be stronger than omnipotence, which is a contradiction in terms.

In a word, God is a being of perfect goodness. He created man with a design to make him happy.* There is nothing in the universe capable of frustrating his design. However, therefore, that design be opposed ; through whatever long or painful discipline man may be conducted to happiness, he must finally attain it.

It does not seem possible to avoid this conclusion, but by saying that the Deity possesses other attributes which are of a nature *contrary* to that upon which the whole of this reasoning

* It is nothing to say, that the happiness intended to be bestowed upon his creatures by the Deity is conditional. There can be no doubt that it is so far conditional that no being can be happy until he becomes virtuous. But the circumstances in which men are placed, and the ultimate effect of those circumstances upon their character were clearly foreseen by the Deity, and if he perceived that any individual, under any particular combination of circumstances, would never become virtuous, he would either have altered his circumstances, or not have called him into existence. One or other of these measures benevolence required.

is founded ; and in fact this is affirmed. To all the arguments in favour of the final happiness of mankind, deduced from the goodness of God, it is replied, that God is a Sovereign, and can do what he pleases ; that he is just, and must maintain the rights of his law ; that he is holy, and must punish sin. All which is here affirmed is certainly true : but it is difficult to conceive how it can oppose the conclusions which are deduced from his goodness. It cannot possibly do so, unless the attributes of sovereignty, justice and holiness are contrary to goodness, and this is what is affirmed. These perfections are conceived to be tremendous attributes which are different from and opposite to goodness. It would seem like trifling to confute this opinion, and to shew that they can be only modifications of benevolence ; yet it is necessary to prove it, and this is attempted in another part of this work. At present it may be sufficient to shew in general, that a being of perfect goodness can possess no attribute which is inconsistent with that perfection.

SECTION IV.

OF THE HARMONY OF THE DIVINE PERFECTIONS.

A BEING of perfect goodness can possess no attribute which is inconsistent with that perfection ; for whatever is inconsistent with goodness is evil, and to affirm that a being may be perfectly good, while he possesses a single attribute which is contrary to goodness is to say, that he may be perfectly good at the same time that he is evil.

Since whatever is inconsistent with goodness is evil ; since it has been proved that all evil has its origin in want or weakness ; since it is universally acknowledged that God is Almighty, and therefore can have no want nor weakness, it follows, that he can possess no attribute which is inconsistent with benevolence.

We have only to determine the nature of an attribute, to decide whether or not it can belong to the Deity. If an attribute be evil, it certainly cannot belong to God. Now the attribute, whatever it be, which inflicts endless misery on any being, is evil. It is not merely affirmed that the attribute is evil which inflicts endless

misery on the great majority of men ; but that that attribute is so which inflicts it even upon one single individual, and the proof is obvious.

Misery considered in itself is evil. Misery is only another word which is used to express pain of some kind or other. Pain considered simply in itself, all will admit, is evil. Whatever produces pain without doing any thing else is evil.

Is all pain then, evil ? No. Why ? Because some pain has an ulterior object, which is the production of good. Hunger for example, is attended with pain, but this pain is not evil, because it has an ulterior object. Its design is not to inflict suffering, but to preserve life by inducing the animal to take food. In proportion, therefore, as life is a good to the animal, the pain which excites him to use the means of preserving it is a good.

Now all pain which has not this ulterior object being pure and simple pain, pain and nothing else, is evil. But misery inflicted through endless ages cannot possibly accomplish this ulterior object, since there is no period in which it can effect it : such misery must be evil, therefore, in the highest possible degree.

It will avail nothing to say that the object of the infliction of endless misery is not pain,

but the satisfaction of immutable justice. This does not in the least affect the argument; for the position is, that that attribute, whatever it may be called, is evil, which inflicts misery upon a being, without doing and without designing to do any thing else to him. To that being it is pure, positive, absolute evil. Whatever makes a being more miserable than happy, the whole of his existence being considered, is to him positive evil. A good being must cause to every creature an excess of pleasure above pain, for he is good to it only in proportion as he does so. Now, according to the doctrine of endless punishment, God does not cause to the great majority of his creatures an excess of pleasure above pain; for he deprives them through the whole of their future existence, of every pleasurable sensation, and inflicts upon them the most unremitted and intolerable anguish.

It is usual to represent the future punishment of the wicked in the following manner. Suppose a large mountain, composed of the minutest grains of sand; suppose one of these grains to be removed once in a million of years, the length of time which would elapse before the removal of the last of these grains infinitely surpasses our power of conception. Yet this period, immeasurable as it is, is not endless, and therefore can convey to the mind but a

faint idea of the duration of the torments of the wicked. We must suppose the globe itself to be composed of grains of sand, nay all the planets of our system, and all the stars which we behold in the heavens; we must suppose that the particles which compose these immense and innumerable bodies, formed into one vast mass, are to be removed by the transposition of a single grain once in a million of years,—the faculties of the human mind are lost in the contemplation of such a period of duration. Yet this period is not endless, and it has been often said, that could the wicked be told, that at the termination of such a period their sufferings would cease, the tidings would fill them with inconceivable transport. But they are not permitted to indulge even this forlorn and awful hope. When this dreadful period shall have elapsed, their sufferings will be but beginning; nay, when millions of such periods shall have passed away, their torment will be no nearer its termination, than at the instant of its commencement. And these sufferings are represented as most dreadful in their nature. No imagination, it is said, can conceive of their horror. No sensation of pleasure can ever again be felt by the soul, but through endless ages it must continue inconceivably miserable, without the intermission

of a single instant, and without any hope of it. And this misery is inflicted for the crimes of eighty, twenty, ten years; inflicted upon the great majority of mankind; inflicted by a Being whose nature is supremely benevolent, and whose tender mercies are, at all times, over all his works!

Such is the doctrine of endless misery. Can any one seriously believe it? Can any human being consider what God is, and what endless misery implies, and affirm that he really thinks the infliction of the one consistent with the perfections of the other?

All the weight of the preceding reasoning, all the obstacles which it opposes to the belief that such can be the end of the greater part of the rational world, created by an infinitely wise, powerful and good Being, may be applied against the doctrine that the wicked will be raised from the dead, made to suffer great bodily anguish, and then blotted out of existence for ever. Against the doctrine of endless punishment, it seems decisive; against the doctrine of limited punishment terminated by destruction it applies with great, though not with equal force: for while the first opinion teaches that he acts altogether contrary to goodness, the second represents him as not acting up to what sober

and unassuming reason seems to indicate the full measure of it.

In a word, if God be really a being of perfect goodness, who can at no time act without the most benevolent design; if, when he created man he intended that he should be pure and happy, and if there be nothing in the universe capable of frustrating his purpose, both the doctrine of endless misery, and that of limited punishment terminated by destruction, appear to be attended with insuperable difficulties. But if, on the other hand, the sin which at present prevails, and the punishment which in future will be inflicted upon it, be the means employed by the Deity to accomplish his benevolent purpose; if the state of discipline in which he will place his erring creatures, be so wisely adapted to their mental and moral disorder, as to oblige them to perceive and feel and hate the folly of which they have been guilty, to excite in them a deep sorrow for it, and a real love of goodness; and if, when thus fitted for pure enjoyment, he mercifully permit them to participate of it, every difficulty vanishes, every thing is consistent, every thing is glorious, every counsel is benevolent, and every perfection harmonizes with the event. His justice, his holiness, his wisdom, his power, his goodness, will have

been exerted, and exerted successfully to bring about the glorious result. Then, indeed, may the universal acclamation of praise spontaneously burst from his intelligent creation—*Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!*

CHAPTER II.

OF THE ARGUMENT IN FAVOUR OF THE DOCTRINE
OF UNIVERSAL RESTORATION, FROM THE NATURE
OF MAN.

A SKILFUL artificer, in constructing a piece of machinery, modifies and combines its various parts so as to make them subservient to a particular purpose, and we estimate the perfection of the mechanism by the completeness with which every thing is included necessary to secure the intended result, and every thing avoided which may impede it. In the external frame of man, there is the most exquisite adaptation of different parts to each other; the most beautiful results are designed and accomplished by contrivances, at one time extremely simple, at another wonderfully complicated, but at all times perfectly wise and efficient. The external frame of man, however, is only a part, and a very inferior part of this wonderful microcosm; and since such inimitable skill has been exerted in the construction of it, we must conclude that the *whole nature* of man is designed to answer some purpose, and

if it be right to judge of the importance of the object, by the magnitude of the means employed to secure it, a purpose truly excellent.

If we examine the higher faculties with which man is endowed, and judge of the purpose for which they are imparted, by that to which they are adapted, we cannot mistake the ends they are designed to answer. All the nobler properties by which he is distinguished, may be arranged with sufficient accuracy for the present purpose, under his intellectual powers, and his social and moral tendencies. He can observe the beauty and order of the world in which he is placed; he can investigate the causes of its phenomena; he can ascertain the laws by which it is governed; he can penetrate into the secret recesses of nature, and contemplate the process by which many of the wonders which surround him are formed; he can extend his view beyond the boundaries of his own world, calculate the distances of the worlds above him, ascertain their magnitude and trace their movements; he can perform a still more difficult task; he can retire into himself, investigate the principles and propensities of his own nature, and reason respecting the very faculties by which he conducts the astonishing process of thought. Endowed with affections which lead him out of himself, and attach him to his fellow-beings, he can rejoice

in their joy, and weep for their woe ; he feels bound to them by the most tender and endearing ties ; without their society, he is gloomy and sad ; so long as he cherishes the generous affections in his intercourse with them, cheerfulness smiles upon his features, and happiness dilates his heart. He can sit in judgment on the nature of his own conduct, distinguish between good and evil, and while he glows with admiration at the contemplation of every generous and sublime affection, he feels indignation and disgust at the selfishness which considers only its own good, and the vice which pursues it at the expense of the general happiness. He can hold intercourse with the Great Being who gave him existence, and who crowns him with good ; and though a mysterious veil, which at present he cannot pierce, shrouds the Sovereign Spirit from his mortal vision, yet he can feel a solemn and endearing consciousness that he is continually present with him ; that he is above him, and beneath him, and around him ; he can hear his voice instructing him in his duty, and perceive his hand directing him in his course, and rejoice in his promise, that he shall re-awake from the sleep of death, burst the fetters of the tomb, enjoy immortal youth, and pursue with unwearied step, through the countless ages of eternity, attainments which rise higher and

higher in infinite progression, and which perpetually fill and enlarge his capacity. Forgetting the enjoyments of the present life, which is but as a moment of time compared with eternal duration, he is capable of acting with a view to his immortal dignity and happiness, and of resigning all which he now holds dear and valuable, if necessary, to promote his future felicity.

Now, for what can a being thus wonderfully endowed be called into existence? For what are such faculties given him? To be for ever misdirected and abused; to be wasted on littleness and devoted to folly; to adorn and secure the triumph of evil, and to afford to the universe an eternal spectacle of majestic desolation, and fallen and perverted grandeur? Or, to add to the beauty of the fair creation, by proving that one principle pervades it; that one Almighty power directs its operation; that in the higher, as well as in the lower part of the works of God, nothing is made in vain; that the means are universally adapted to the end, and the end invariably secured by the means?

If this be not the case, how singular is it that man should furnish the only instance in the creation, of a complicated adaptation of means which answer no end, or rather of an admirable and exalted provision, entirely perverted from its purpose! If we examine any other part of

the world, if we look beneath us or above us, we can perceive nothing analogous to it. All the inferior animals fulfil the object of their creation; they take no thought of to-morrow; they look not before nor after; the sun shines upon them, they bask in its beams, and are content: the verdant surface of the earth presents them with a rich repast; they eat, they lie down to rest, they rise with the morning's dawn, pursuing from day to day the same unvarying round, and happy without knowing or desiring to know more. Those exalted intelligences of which we are accustomed to conceive as forming the highest orders of creation, and fulfilling the highest counsels of the Sovereign Spirit, however sublime their capacities, and illimitable their desires, are filled with that adorable object which they continually contemplate and serve. Why, then, is man the only creature in the universe who possesses a nature which falsifies every appearance, and disappoints every expectation; a capacity which enables him to soar with the Seraph, and a destiny which levels him with the brute?

The few attainments which he at present makes, should by no means render it incredible, that his distant and advanced progress will be thus sublime; for those attainments, inconsiderable as they are, afford an animating assurance

of his ultimate perfection. They form the commencement of a course, which as it is to continue through an interminable series of ages, so it must promote an illimitable improvement. They *may* terminate, it is obvious, in a perfection of knowledge and happiness, as great as the imagination can conceive; for in order to do so, they require no change in their nature, but only an increase in their degree: the very acquisitions which an enlightened and virtuous man has already made, carried on to their possible extent, may place him at a point as high in the scale of creation, as that which the first-born Seraph at present occupies. Nor does what we know of his past, oppose what we thus augur of his future progress. Who that saw Newton when an infant, leaning on his mother's bosom, and had never witnessed an instance of a similar progress, would have believed that that little and fatuous creature would, in the short space of a few years, be able to measure the distances of the stars, and to teach to a listening world, the laws which regulate their mighty movements? The attainments of such a being in his progress from infancy to manhood, are infinitely more wonderful than any which we suppose him afterwards to make: for in the one case, it is an astonishing progress commencing from nothing; in the other, it is only the continuance of a course

already greatly advanced : so that it is not even so incredible, that a man should arrive at the attainments of an angel, as that an infant should gain the acquisitions of a man.

Neither ought any present neglect or perversion of his powers, to bring doubt upon our conclusion, that his ultimate destiny will be thus great and sublime : for a temporary and partial obstruction to his progress may be beneficial, and it is evidently the design of his Creator to lead him on to perfection by slow degrees, and from a low origin. At all events, it is certain that every human being possesses a capacity for this illimitable improvement, and that if the great majority of mankind are to continue for ever ignorant, vicious and miserable, this capacity, unlike any thing else in the creation, is given in vain.

And, however great and lamentable the present errors and imperfections of mankind may be, yet it is obvious that they have made, and that they are making, a gradual advancement towards a better state. Already they have gained much, and what they have acquired they will retain. Never was their knowledge so varied and extensive as it is at present ; never were they in such favourable circumstances for enlarging and perfecting their acquisitions : the art of printing secures to the latest posterity

every valuable discovery, and the system of education, which is daily improving, and which is actually extending its benefits to vast multitudes, renders the general diffusion of knowledge easy and rapid. In many instances we at present recognize such a liberality of thinking among the common people, as would have been sought in vain, a few years ago, in the most enlightened philosophers; and the youth now commences his career where the aged used to terminate their course. It is impossible to foresee where this will end; it is impossible to predict the extent to which this improvement may be carried, or the influence it may have in diffusing an enlightened and comprehensive view of what is wise and just in conduct, in checking the indulgence of gross selfishness, in controlling the turbulent, and eradicating the malignant passions, and in forming virtuous and benevolent habits.

But even though all this should be a dream, and we should be obliged to admit the melancholy conclusion, that error and misery are connected by an indissoluble bond with the present state, and that the experience of the past, and the discoveries of the future, will avail nothing to deliver mankind from their influence; yet, if there be a hereafter, surely it is more reasonable to conclude, that these disorders will

cease then, that the discipline under which the mind will be placed in this new state of being will correct, not increase its perversion, and that, instructed by experience, and purified by suffering, it will at length see objects as they are, and estimate them as it ought, affording to its faculties their proper exertion, and to its affections their proper enjoyment, than, that its errors will continue through endless ages, or till they have effected its utter destruction.

To all this reasoning, however, which should seem no less solid than cheering, it has been objected, that the fundamental principle upon which it is founded, is not just; that the strict connexion which it supposes between the purpose and the event, does not invariably happen; that there are in nature adaptations which do not always secure the intended result, designs which are not completed, and that in fact there are many cases in which the object of nature is evidently and completely defeated; that every blossom, for example, does not ripen into fruit, nor every embryo attain the maturity of which it is capable, and for which it was obviously designed; that in every instance of this kind, there is as great a failure of the design of the Deity, as can well be imagined, and that as this is not supposed to be inconsistent with his perfections, so there may be the same apparent

frustration of his plan with regard to human beings, without any impeachment of his wisdom or goodness.

To this objection, which is much more ingenious than solid, two answers may be given. In the first place, it may be replied, that though all analogical reasoning is founded upon a comparison of the lower with the higher parts of creation, and of the higher with the lower, yet this objection supposes that comparison to be carried farther than it can justly be extended, namely, to the final destiny of creatures of different orders. Because a being of an inferior order terminates its existence at a certain period, and with certain phenomena, we cannot conclude that a being of a superior order will do the same. A striking conformity between a particular organization in a fly and a man, may lead to the conclusion that that organization is designed to answer a similar purpose in both. This deduction from analogy is fair and conclusive. But, if because at a certain period, this insect changes its state, and loses thereby its conscious existence, it be inferred, that a change of state in man, in many respects similar, is also attended with a final loss of conscious existence, this deduction from analogy is not fair and conclusive; because there may be something in the nature of a being possessing

the faculties of a man, to prevent that change from being final, which may not exist in an insect possessing only the properties of a fly : being already distinguished from the fly by the faculty of reason, he may possess this other distinctive property of surviving his apparent dissolution ; or their common Creator may have something in view, by appointing the change in the one which he may not have in the other. The analogy to this extent, therefore, does not hold : but to this extent, the objection under consideration supposes it to hold ; for it supposes that human beings may be prematurely destroyed, because the rudiments of an insect or vegetable are so. It is therefore a false analogy.

Another very important view may be taken of this subject. Nothing is more evident, than that in many instances, the inferior part of the creation is made chiefly, if not entirely, for the use of the superior. The vegetable world is formed for the animal, and in like manner to minister to the convenience and comfort of the higher, appears in many cases to be the final cause of the existence of the lower orders of the animal creation ; and, supposing these lower orders to be at the same time happy, as far as they are capable of being so, (which is always the case,) this is a plan of admirable wisdom and beauty. Supposing, for example, it were wise and good

in the Deity to give to the superior animals of our globe their present constitution, a constitution, that is, to the support of which, many of the fruits of the earth, and many of the inferior animals are necessary, then it is an instance of wisdom and goodness to make such a provision, that these fruits and animals shall always sufficiently abound: for were they from any cause to fail, the most disastrous consequences must ensue, to those higher orders, for which chiefly the inferior exist. Now, the only way by which it seems possible, by a general law, (and we have seen that it is by general laws that the Deity executes the purposes of his government,) to guard against such a calamity, is to provide in every period more of these inferior beings than is absolutely necessary at any; and there will appear the greater wisdom in this appointment, when it is considered that beauty and enjoyment will be multiplied by it in the exact degree in which the superabundance may prevail. For this care, therefore, to provide for possible as well as actual existence, we see the most benevolent reason, so that, though every blossom do not ripen into fruit, nor every embryo develop its latent faculties, this is so far from being a proof of the frustration of the plan of the Deity, that it is the reverse; since this superabundant provision is the very means he has adopted to

secure his purpose. These blossoms and embryos, though they perish, fulfil the design of their creation : had they been necessary, they were ready to ripen into maturity to supply the want which might exist ; but not being needed, they read an instructive lesson to the intelligent creation, saying to it—" Behold the never-failing care of your Creator to secure your happiness !" and then are seen no more.

In the second place, when from the failure of the blossom, and the destruction of the embryo, it is urged, that there may be a similar loss in regard to human beings, it may be replied, that there is really no sort of parallel between the two cases. Every blossom, it is true, does not ripen into its proper fruit, nor every embryo grow into a perfect animal, yet neither is any blossom or embryo *perverted* from its genuine nature, into one which is opposite. Every blossom of an apple does not ultimately form an apple, but neither does it become a poisonous fruit : every embryo does not grow into a perfect animal, but neither does it degenerate into a disgusting monster. But the doctrine which teaches that man was created for purity and happiness, but that he will continue for ever vicious and miserable, and that which teaches that he will remain so for unknown ages, and then be destroyed, not only supposes that he

does not attain his proper nature, but that it becomes perverted into that which is directly opposite. It supposes what never takes place, what is not only not supported by any analogy of nature, but what all analogy contradicts ; it supposes a change infinitely greater than would happen, were the blossom of an apple to fail in forming an apple, and ripen into hemlock, or the embryo of a lamb, instead of producing the most innoxious of animals, to grow into an adder. Nothing like this ever takes place in any of the works of God with which we are acquainted : it is reasonable, therefore, to conclude, that it will not occur in his highest and noblest. Were this example adduced to shew, that the same *kind* of failure might take place among human beings, that those human embryos, for instance, which never see the light, and those infants which die before the development of their faculties, perish, there would thus far be some analogy between the two cases, and that which happened to the one, might with some show of reason be supposed to befall the other ; but for the reasons assigned, in the first answer to this objection, the conclusion would not be valid even thus far, and farther than this, it could not possibly go. To argue from it, that man, whose nature fits him for the attainments of an angel, not only falls short of these acquisitions, but degenerates into

a malignant spirit, is altogether gratuitous and unfounded: there is no analogy between the one case and the other.

In a word, both the doctrine which teaches that man will go on to sin and suffer for ever, and that which maintains that he will do so for unknown ages, and then be destroyed, must be founded either upon the principle that the Deity, when offended, is not to be appeased, or that man, when he has departed from the path of rectitude, is not to be reclaimed. No one will venture to maintain, that the Deity is unappeasable, and to suppose that he is unable to reclaim his offending offspring, is equally absurd.

Indeed, from what we know of man's nature, and of the adaptation of the moral government of his Creator to it, we can clearly perceive *how* he may be reclaimed, even from the lowest depths of guilt.

He is the creature of circumstance. He is made what he is, entirely by the train of events which have befallen him. The powers with which he is endowed, have been called into action by surrounding objects, and the nature of that action has been determined, by that of the objects which have induced it. Had the situation of any human being varied in the least, there must have been a proportionable difference in his character.

This is so true, that any being who had entirely in his own hands the direction of the events of the world, and who possessed a perfect knowledge of the nature of man, might make his character whatever he pleased. There is no affection, however fixed, which he might not change, no habit, however inveterate, which he might not eradicate. And this he might effect, as we have already shewn, without putting the least constraint upon the will, or making the slightest infringement on the liberty of the moral agent; for, by changing his circumstances, he might alter his volition, and thus excite in him the desire to do or to be, whatever he might wish him to accomplish or to become.

Now this direction of events, and this knowledge of character, the Deity is always supposed to possess in a supreme and perfect degree. There is nothing which he does not know; nothing which he cannot accomplish. Suppose, then, it is his will to reclaim a person who has lost all taste for goodness, and contracted the most inveterate habits of vice. The reformation of such a being, is a thing in itself possible. As, then, the Deity knows every thing, he must perceive what circumstances will be adequate to produce the requisite change, and as he can do every thing, it must be in his power to cause this train of events to happen. Here, then, is a

power abundantly adequate to accomplish whatever may be necessary.

That this formation of the character of man, by the circumstances in which he is placed, is perpetually going on, under the divine direction, in the present state, is acknowledged on all hands, and constitutes what is termed the moral government of God. Now the defect of every scheme but that which it is the object of this reasoning to establish, is, that it makes the operation of this moral government to cease with the present state. But if the wicked are to exist hereafter, it is certain that they must be placed in some circumstances or other; these circumstances must have some effect upon their minds, and the nature of that effect, whether it be such as to confirm them in their vicious course, or to reclaim them from it, must entirely depend upon these circumstances. It is a being of perfect wisdom and goodness, upon whom their appointment depends. Can we then doubt of their nature and tendency?

Let the mind then seriously consider what the human nature is: that it is capable of pure, refined and exalted happiness in an illimitable degree; that it is made for the enjoyment of this felicity; that its benevolent author exercises over it a continual government which tends to remove, and which, if its operation continue,

must ultimately remove all that is opposed to it; and determine which scheme is most probable, that which teaches that the great majority of mankind shall never taste of happiness, but suffer the most intolerable and unremitted anguish during an endless being; or that which affirms, that after having endured this misery for unknown ages, they shall be for ever blotted out of existence; or that which maintains, that all which their Maker designed concerning them, shall come to pass; that the very sin and suffering which afflict them, shall be the means of working out their final purity and happiness, and that they shall accomplish this in so excellent and perfect a manner, as triumphantly to prove, that notwithstanding all our present difficulties about the existence of natural and moral evil, **THE BENEVOLENT PARENT OF MANKIND HAS ACCOMPLISHED THE BEST END BY THE WISEST MEANS.** If the latter opinion be indeed favoured by these two great principles, the perfections of God and the nature of man, its truth must be considered as established.

If, then, we could go no farther, the arguments which have been adduced to support the doctrine of the ultimate restoration of all mankind to purity and happiness, appear sufficient to produce a rational and solid conviction of its truth. They prove, certainly, that it rests upon

much firmer ground than either of the doctrines which oppose it; and when in connexion with this, *the doctrine itself*, is considered, every reflective mind must surely incline to prefer it. If, then, we could not produce another argument in support of it, and if, on examining the Scriptures, it be found that they do not contradict it, (supposing they do not expressly favour, if they do not directly confute it,) it must be admitted as true, because, in that case, there will be much to favour, and nothing to oppose it. But, in point of fact, reason furnishes us with still more conclusive arguments, and the scriptural evidence in support of it, is decisive.

CHAPTER III.

OF THE ARGUMENT IN FAVOUR OF THE DOCTRINE OF UNIVERSAL RESTORATION, FROM THE NATURE AND OBJECT OF PUNISHMENT.

ONE of the chief objections to the doctrine which it is the object of the preceding reasoning to establish, is, that although the Deity is in the highest degree wise and good, yet that he is at the same time, an irreconcilable enemy to sin, that he will visit it with the punishment it deserves, and that while we are sure that that punishment must be great, we have no means of ascertaining its exact extent.

If the doctrine of Universal Restoration denied this, that circumstance would be fatal to it, whatever might be urged in its favour; but God's abhorrence of sin, and his determination to punish it, not only do not militate against this doctrine, but afford the most powerful arguments in support of it.

In order to be satisfied of this, it is necessary only to establish clear and precise conceptions

concerning the nature of divine punishment. What is the meaning of this term? It has been lately defined thus: *Punishment is the conduct of God with respect to the wicked, in the capacity of a judge.*

The defect of this account is, that it is a definition which requires a definition; for, when in an inquiry concerning the nature of divine punishment, it is said, that it is the conduct of God with respect to the wicked, in the capacity of a judge, we must inevitably put the ulterior question—What is the nature of that conduct? Whence another definition must be given, which perhaps may require a third.

Let the following definition be substituted for the former: *Punishment is the infliction of pain, in consequence of the neglect or violation of duty.* When we say a person is punished, we mean that he suffers some pain or privation, in consequence of his having omitted what he ought to have done, or of his having done what he ought to have avoided.

Is there any distinction between punishment and revenge? They are universally believed to be totally different in their nature. What, then, is the exact difference between them? It is of the utmost importance to ascertain this, because revenge is the only thing with which punishment can be confounded.

It has been said, that punishment is the infliction of pain, in consequence of the neglect or violation of duty. Let us then say, that *Revenge is the infliction of pain, in consequence of the commission of injury.* The neglect of duty seems to give rise to punishment; the commission of injury to revenge. But since the commission of injury must necessarily be resolved, either into a neglect or violation of duty, it follows, that these two definitions are exactly the same. Either, therefore, the definition of punishment must be defective, or that of revenge must be false; for if these two things really differ from each other, it is impossible that the same definition can apply to both.

We purposely made these definitions defective, in order that the difference between punishment and revenge might be more clearly seen, and that the appearance of taking for granted the point in dispute might be avoided.

It is necessary to add to the former definition of punishment, the words, “With a view to correct the evil;” and to that of revenge, the words, “With a view to gratify a malignant passion.”—These definitions will then stand thus :

Punishment is the infliction of pain, in consequence of the neglect or violation of duty, WITH A VIEW TO CORRECT THE EVIL.

Revenge is the infliction of pain, in consequence of the commission of injury, WITH A VIEW TO GRATIFY A MALIGNANT PASSION.

That the pain which punishment occasions, must be inflicted with a view to correct the evil produced by the neglect or violation of duty, will appear perfectly obvious, by attending to the exact meaning of the language we are in the habit of employing on this subject. What do we mean, when we say, that we neglect or violate our duty? We mean, that we neglect or destroy our own happiness, or that of others. When we neglect or destroy our own happiness, or that of others, we produce a certain degree of misery. This is wrong, since it is contrary to the design for which we exist, which is to communicate and to enjoy happiness. On account of the commission of this wrong, punishment is inflicted; that is, another portion of misery is produced. Who causes this second portion of misery? The punisher. Thus far, then, the punisher and the punished are on the same footing: they have both done exactly the same thing: they have both produced misery. What then constitutes the difference between them? The violator of his duty deserves punishment, because he has done that which either has produced, or which tends to produce misery: but the punisher himself has done exactly the

same thing, that is, he has occasioned pain : why then is he *not* worthy of punishment, for the very act of punishing ?

The reason is to be found in the *design* with which the punisher inflicts the pain of which he is the occasion. He has in view the restoration of the offender, to a state of feeling and action, indispensable to the happiness of others, and to his own. He produces misery, but it is the instrument he employs to destroy it. If he have not this in view, he is even more criminal than the person he punishes, since the infliction of pain is the only thing he designs : he rests in it as his end ; it is his ultimate object ; but the vicious, in general, produce misery only incidentally, through a mistaken and perverted pursuit of happiness, and it is more malignant to aim *solely* at the infliction of pain, to rest in it as an object and end, than to occasion it by a miscalculation of the means of enjoyment. It is this very circumstance that it rests in misery as its ultimate object, which constitutes the extreme malignity of revenge ; and it does not seem possible to shew, how he who inflicts pain on an offender, from any other motive but that of correcting the evil of which he has been the occasion, acts upon a different principle.

When it is said, that punishment must have respect to the correction of evil produced by

the violation or neglect of duty, it should be observed, that this is meant to include both the evil disposition of the criminal, and the evil consequences which his crimes occasion. That correction is evidently imperfect, which has respect to the one, but not to the other; which aims to remove the injury done to society, but not the evil principle which is its source: or on the contrary, the evil principle, but not its injurious consequences.

Though the misconception which prevails on this subject, has originated chiefly from denying the corrective nature of punishment, yet, in point of fact, no one disbelieves that it is corrective. Many persons, indeed, deny it in express terms, and much of their reasoning seems to depend upon their disbelief, that it has any tendency of this kind, but sometimes they strenuously contend for the very point which at others they labour to disprove. Though they affirm that punishment is not corrective, what they mean is, that it does not amend the evil disposition of the criminal: they acknowledge that it corrects, or is designed to correct the evil consequences of his offences. But if it be the design of punishment to repair or to counteract the evil effects of a crime to society, it is in its nature corrective: if the reformation of the criminal form no part of the design, it is not so

corrective as it would be, were that the case : but it is certainly corrective ; and the error lies in supposing, that punishment is intended to correct only a part of the evil, the bad consequences of a criminal disposition, but not the criminal disposition itself.

In punishments inflicted by human beings upon one another, it is often difficult to effect both, as indeed it is to accomplish either ; but it is universally acknowledged, that that punishment is not benevolent which does not aim at, nor that effectual which does not secure, both.

And surely it is possible to render every penal infliction thus complete. If pain or privation can counteract the evil consequences of the conduct of an offender, it may be so applied as to eradicate his evil disposition. He who is perfectly acquainted with the criminal temper, understands exactly the circumstances which would change it, and has a sovereign control over events, has the power to correct it ; and if he punish with any design, it is inconceivable that this, which is not only the most benevolent but the most necessary, will form no part of it.

But it is urged, that there is an intrinsic demerit in sin ; something in its nature which requires that it should be visited with punishment ; that it is possible, therefore, to punish an offender without a view to correct the evil, and

without revenge, namely, to satisfy the claims of immutable and eternal justice.

Before replying directly to this objection, it may be observed, that the term justice is often used as though it expressed an attribute which is contrary to goodness. But in reality, justice is only a particular modification of goodness; goodness modified by wisdom, according to the moral condition of the being with respect to whom it is exercised. A person who forgives an offence upon repentance and reformation, is good: this is one modification of goodness, which is designated by the term mercy. The person who visits an offence which is neither repented of nor amended, with a proper degree of pain, is also good: this is another modification of goodness, to which the term justice is applied. Mercy and justice, therefore, do not differ from each other in their nature, since they equally arise from benevolence, and they differ in aspect only, according to the moral condition of the being with regard to whom they are exemplified. So that justice cannot require the infliction of misery for its own sake: nothing but malignity can either desire or approve of such unavailing suffering.

Since justice and mercy equally arise from benevolence, there is as much reason to suppose that mercy requires the infliction of misery for

its own sake, as that justice does. The object of justice is not to feast itself with suffering, but to produce happiness by the infliction of pain, where wisdom teaches it is necessary : the object of mercy is exactly the same, only it pursues its purpose by omitting the infliction of pain, where wisdom shews that it is *not* necessary.

There is, it is affirmed, an intrinsic demerit in sin ; something in its nature which requires that it should be visited with punishment. What is that something ? I think we may venture to affirm, that no one can imagine it to be any thing but the tendency of sin to produce misery. But the infliction of pain, upon that which has a tendency to occasion pain, is the application of an effectual remedy to a destructive disease ; not the visitation of suffering upon something which is inexplicable, with a design which is equally incomprehensible.

If what is here termed demerit, and which is supposed to be something intrinsic in sin, require, as an equitable satisfaction, the infliction of a certain degree of pain, without aiming at the reformation of the offender, or the prevention of sin in future, its infliction with this view alone, is the infliction of nothing else but misery, the production of which is all that is done or designed ; a remedy, which, as has just been observed, is more malignant than the disease

itself. It is vain to repeat that the object in view is the satisfaction of justice, not the infliction of pain: for this is to reason in a circle; it is to say, that justice requires that sin should be visited with pain, on account of its intrinsic demerit, and then to argue that there is an intrinsic demerit in sin, because justice requires that it should be visited with pain.

It seems possible, however, to go much farther in reply to this objection, and to shew that the term demerit is without meaning, upon the hypothesis which is here assumed. Let us attend to the manner in which we come at the idea which the word expresses.

There is such a thing as virtue, and there is such a thing, of an opposite nature, as vice. Such is the constitution of man, that virtue must eventually promote his happiness, and vice his misery. In proportion as an action partakes of the nature of virtue, it is said to coincide with the object of this constitution, and to merit happiness: in proportion as it partakes of the nature of vice, it is said to be opposed to the object of this constitution, and to deserve misery. The very origin of this word, then, leads us to a moral constitution, which can have no object but the production of happiness, and the prevention of misery; and accordingly we find, that the degree of demerit in an action, that is,

the degree of suffering it deserves, is always in proportion to the extent of the misery it tends to produce.

That all the divine punishments are corrective, is evident likewise from every thing which we see or know of these inflictions. All experience is in favour of the doctrine of corrective punishment, and against that which denies it. To what example can we point, where misery is connected with sin, in which the pain has not a tendency to correct the evil? Every passion of our nature carried to excess is criminal; every passion carried to excess is painful. This pain is said to be the punishment of the passion, now, from its having passed the bounds of moderation and justice, become criminal. The same is true of every evil propensity and habit whatever. All are attended with pain or inconvenience, which increases in proportion to the enormity of the evil. What is the design of this constitution? It is not possible to mistake it. It is not in our power to assign to it any other object than the correction of the excess, the eradication of the evil propensity, the change of the evil habit.

If, then, in the very constitution of our nature, we recognize this benevolent design; if our own hearts punish us for all our deviations from the path of rectitude, and will not permit us to be

at peace in sin, in order that we may continually follow after virtue; can we suppose that the punishment which the Deity will hereafter inflict upon his erring creatures, will have no such tendency? That the pain which he makes the natural consequence of transgression is purely and highly corrective, but that that which he himself will bring upon the transgressor, that which by his own direct act he will superadd, will not be so? And, that instead of perfecting by his immediate and decisive interposals, the primary object of the constitution of his creatures, he will totally abandon it, and pursue one of which he has given no indication in their nature, and to which nothing in their nature tends?

That all the punishment inflicted upon offenders in the present state is corrective, is universally acknowledged. Those, therefore, who suppose that this will not be the case in a future world, must believe that the Deity will hereafter punish with a different design from that which he pursues at present; that he will change the object and end of his inflictions. But why will he do so? What reason can there be to believe, that the purpose of him who changeth not is thus mutable? The mode and the measure of punishment he may vary; circumstances may require

it of his wisdom, but his great and ultimate object, like his own most perfect nature, must be eternally the same.

If these observations are founded in truth, the inferences deducible from them throw upon this subject a light and glory, which render it an object of gratifying as well as of impressive contemplation.

If the punishment which the Deity inflicts be corrective, it follows that no punishment can be without end ; for a punishment which is both corrective and endless, is a contradiction in terms.

If all punishment be corrective, it follows that no more punishment than what is absolutely necessary to produce reformation will be imposed ; for he who endeavours to correct an evil, will accomplish his object as speedily and with as little loss of happiness as possible.

If all punishment be corrective, it follows that as much as is necessary to eradicate sin will be inflicted. This to the sinner is a most alarming consideration. God cannot inflict infinite misery upon a finite being, but we know not to how great an extent within the limit of finiteness, it may be just and right and necessary to impose it. Of all the truths which can occupy the attention of human beings, this certainly is

the most momentous. If there be certainty in religion, or truth in God, he who in the present state neglects the improvement of his privileges, indulges evil habits, lives in sin and dies in impenitence, must in a future world endure an anguish, of which at present he can form no adequate conception. It is reasonable to believe that this *must* be the case ; for the bitter consciousness of self-degradation, and the horror of deep remorse, must be felt, and we require to know no more to be assured that the sensation must be intolerable. Such is the dictate of reason : the declarations of scripture confirm it. They describe the punishment of obstinate and unrepentant guilt as a fearful looking for of wrath, treasured up against the day of wrath. It is a worm that dieth not ; it is a fire that is not quenched. It is the worm of remorse, preying with incessant avidity upon an awakened conscience ; it is the fire of tumultuous passions, which cannot be quenched till it has consumed the evil of the heart which has indulged them. Though justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne, thou art terrible, O Lord, in thy chastisements, for terrible is the evil with which thou art at war, and which it is the design of thy benevolent chastisements to eradicate. “ Let then the wicked man forsake his ways,

and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn unto the Lord who will have mercy upon him, and unto our God who will abundantly pardon him.”

Part Third.

OF THE OBJECTIONS WHICH ARE URGED AGAINST THE DOCTRINE OF UNIVERSAL RESTORATION, WHETHER DERIVED FROM THOSE PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE, OR FROM THOSE REASONINGS WHICH ARE SUPPOSED TO PROVE THE DOCTRINE OF ENDLESS MISERY, OR FROM THOSE WHICH ARE CONCEIVED TO FAVOUR THE DOCTRINE OF LIMITED PUNISHMENT, TERMINATED BY DESTRUCTION.

HAVING considered those arguments in favour of the opinion that purity and happiness will ultimately and universally prevail, which appear to be in a great measure independent of the testimony of Revelation, it would now be proper to examine the evidence which the Scriptures afford in support of it. But as many objections to this doctrine, commonly deemed insuperable, are derived from the language of scripture, it is necessary to consider, in the first place, the validity of the testimony which it thus seems to bear against it; otherwise the evidence which it really affords in its favour, will not have its just weight upon the mind.

The chief objections to the doctrine of Universal Restoration are derived from two sources : from certain passages of Scripture, and from certain reasonings which are supposed to prove the doctrine of Endless Misery ; and from certain expressions which are conceived to favour the doctrine of Limited Punishment, terminated by Destruction. It will be proper to consider each separately.

CHAPTER I.

OF ENDLESS MISERY.



THE doctrine of Endless Misery teaches, that with the exception of the first man, God brings the whole human race into existence with an innate propensity to evil : * that to counteract this fatal tendency, in favour of a few individuals termed the elect, he specially interposes, †

* “ The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell, consisteth in the guilt of Adam’s first sin; the want of that righteousness wherein he was created, and the corruption of his nature, whereby he is utterly indisposed, disabled and made opposite unto all that is spiritually good, and wholly inclined to all evil, and that continually.”—*Assembly’s Larger Catechism, Quest. xxv.*

† “ By the decree of God for the manifestation of his glory, some men are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others fore-ordained to everlasting death. Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ, unto everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or any other thing in the creature as conditions or causes moving him thereunto, and all to the praise of his glorious grace.”—*Confession*

irresistibly influencing them to avoid whatever might endanger their salvation, and to do what is necessary to secure it ; * that the great majority of his creatures, termed the non-elect, he leaves to the operation of a nature, which must inevitably ensure their ruin ; † that for these unhappy beings he does not interpose ; ‡ that he abandons them to endless and inconceivable misery, § and that from all eternity he appointed

of Faith, chap. iii. “ All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, AND THOSE ONLY, he is pleased in his accepted time, effectually to call.”—*Ibid.* chap. x.

* “ They whom God hath effectually called, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved. This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own free will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election,” &c.—*Ibid.* chap. xvii.

† “ Others not elected, although they may be called by the ministry of the word, and may have some common operations of the spirit, yet they never truly come to Christ, and therefore cannot be saved ; much less can men not professing the Christian religion be saved in any other way whatsoever, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, and to the law of that religion they do profess ; and to assert and maintain that they may, is very pernicious, and to be detested.”—*Ibid.* chap. x.

‡ “ These men thus predestinated and fore-ordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and the number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished.”—*Ibid.* chap. iii.

§ “ The punishments of sin in the world to come, are ever-

them to this dreadful destiny, by an irreversible decree determining them to condemnation.*

The most execrable tyrant that ever desolated the world is benevolence itself, compared with the character which this tremendous doctrine gives to the benevolent Parent of the human race. If it be true, God is not good ; for it has already been proved, that in giving existence to sensitive creatures, a benevolent being must make it upon the whole a blessing. No creature, it is admitted, has a right to existence : it is a boon to which it is impossible that there could have been a previous claim, but being bestowed, justice as well as benevolence requires that it should be rendered upon the whole a good, because non-existence is not an evil, but a life in which misery preponderates, is. However low an individual may be placed in the scale of being, or whatever pain may be mingled in his lot, if the balance of happiness be in his favour, he can ask no more ; his great inalienable right is respected ; it is his duty to submit to the evil with resignation, and to accept the good with

lasting separation from the comfortable presence of God, *and most grievous torments in soul and body, without intermission, in hell fire for ever.*”—*Assembly's Catechism, Quest. xxix.*

* “ By the decree of God for the manifestation of his glory, some men are fore-ordained to everlasting death.”—*Confession of Faith, chap. iii.*

gratitude : but if the balance of pleasure be against him, he has cause to murmur, and the being who gave him life upon such terms is not good, nor can any sophistry prove him to be so.

Were it possible for benevolence to reside in the bosom of a being, who could decree the intolerable and unending anguish of millions and millions and millions of his creatures, it might, indeed, be inferred that the God of election is good to the elect ; but to the non-elect he is not good ; he never was, and he never intended to be. He gave them existence with a determination to make it an everlasting curse ;* he brought

* To say that it is not God's decree, but man's own sin which renders him miserable for ever, is trifling in the extreme ; for since God is his creator, he must be the author of that nature which he brings with him into the world ; so that if it be utterly indisposed, disabled and made opposite unto all that is spiritually good, and wholly inclined to all evil, and that continually, it is such only in consequence of his creator having been pleased to make it so. The circumstances in which mankind are placed are likewise entirely God's appointment. He is then the author of their nature, such as it is, when they commence the career of life, and of the circumstances which call their propensities into action ; both that nature and these circumstances are such, that the ultimate result could not possibly be otherwise than it is. " God's decrees are the wise, free and holy acts of the counsel of his will, whereby from all eternity he hath, for his own glory, *unchangeably fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass.*" ASSEMBLY'S CATECHISM, Quest. xii. He wills the propensity ; he

them into being not to enjoy, for against that he passed a decree which no power in earth or heaven can resist, but to suffer through the ages of eternity, unremitted and intolerable anguish.

Were there in the nature of the Deity not the least portion of benevolence, instead of being as it is, pure benignity; were it unmixed evil, it could not be worse for the great majority of his creatures than according to this terrible doctrine it actually is. At present, indeed, they enjoy some degree of pleasure, but it is only sufficient, in the awful period of futurity, to carry their misery to the highest pitch, by enabling them to comprehend their eternal loss; and accordingly, the bitterest anguish of the damned is usually represented as arising from recollections of the present state—recollections of happiness once participated with delight, but now departed for ever.

Were, then, the Deity, instead of being pure benevolence, malignant as malignity itself, and had he engaged in the work of creation on purpose to gratify his malevolent propensities, he could not, as far as we can see, have contrived a plan better calculated to effect his purpose, than

will the means; and he so adapts the means to the propensity, and the propensity to the means, as inevitably to secure the end; and to affirm, therefore, that he does not will the *end*, is utterly absurd.

that which this doctrine teaches he actually has adopted, with regard to the great majority of his creatures.

Can any person look into his own heart, and read the proofs which are registered there of his most excellent and lovely character, without feeling disgust and horror at a doctrine, which thus enshrouds him in the deep and awful gloom of cruelty and malevolence?

It is affirmed that there are passages of Scripture, which in the most express and positive manner assert the truth of this opinion, and others which imply it. This is not true; but there are, it must be admitted, passages, which, to the English reader, may *seem* to favour it. These deserve serious and impartial examination. Let us bring to the investigation of them unprejudiced and candid minds, willing to ascertain the truth.

SECTION I.

OF THE TERM EVERLASTING.

IN favour of the doctrine of Endless Misery, the following passages are quoted, and are generally deemed decisive. Isaiah xxxiii. 14: "The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" Dan. xii. 2: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." Matt. xviii. 8: "Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot cause thee to offend, cut them off and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire." Matt. xxv. 41: "Then shall he say also to them on the left hand, Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Ver. 46: "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." Mark iii. 29: "But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation." 2 Thess. i. 7—9:

“The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power.” Rev. xiv. 11: “The smoke of their torment goeth up for ever and ever.” xix. 3: “The smoke goeth up for ever and ever.” xx. 10: “They (the beast and false prophet) shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.” 2 Peter ii. 17. Jude 13: “To whom the blackness of darkness is reserved for ever.” Jude 6, 7: “And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day. Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about these in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication and going after strange flesh, are set forth an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”

These, I believe, are all the passages in the Bible in which the terms everlasting and eternal are used in relation to future punishment; and it is obvious, that they are very few compared with what is commonly supposed. From the frequency with which they are generally repeated, persons imagine that the Bible is full of

expressions of this kind; yet they occur twice only in the Old Testament. In the gospel of Luke they are not to be found, and they occur but once in that of Mark. St. John does not once employ them, either in his gospel or in his epistles, and they will be sought in vain in the account of the preaching of the apostles, in all their discourses which are put upon record, from the beginning to the end of the Acts. Though the writings of the apostle Paul form so large a portion of the New Testament, yet he never uses any language of this kind, except in one single instance, and then his expression is, *everlasting destruction*. Such words are no where to be found in the epistle of James, and they are totally absent from the epistles of Peter.

The truth of the doctrine cannot, however, be supposed to depend upon the frequency with which it is repeated. One decisive proof is sufficient. The preceding facts are mentioned only to remove the common error, that the application of the terms everlasting and eternal to future punishment is of constant recurrence.

All the proof which the above passages can afford in support of the endless duration of punishment, must depend upon the words *everlasting* and *eternal*, and presuppose that they denote duration without end: but in order to shew this, it is necessary to prove both that this is their primitive meaning, and that they are

invariably used in this sense in scripture. That they do not primarily denote endless duration, seems evident from the fact that they have a plural number. Had the primitive meaning of the substantive, *αιων*, been eternity, and of the adjective, *αιωνιος*, endless, they could scarcely have possessed a plural signification, since it would have involved the same absurdity as is manifest when, attaching to the term eternity the sense which it always bears in the English language, we speak of eternities.

That these words are not *invariably* used in the Scriptures to signify duration without end, is indisputable: yet they require to have this sense constantly and without exception, if their application to the subject of punishment be *alone* sufficient to prove its absolute eternity, for if they ever denote limited duration, they *may* do so in regard to future punishment.

In order to ascertain the exact meaning of these terms, and the length of duration they signify, it is necessary to consider how they are used respecting other subjects in the New Testament, and in the Greek translation of the Old.

The word *Αιων* (*æon*) is used in Scripture in several different senses. Sometimes it signifies the term of human life; at other times the duration of the world, and at others an age or dispensation of providence: in its plural form it denotes the ages of the world, or any measure-

ment of time, especially if its termination be hidden, but its most common signification is that of age or dispensation. It has this sense in the following passages.

Matt. xiii. 22: "He who received seed among thorns is he who heareth the word and the anxious care," τὸ αἰῶνος τὸ τὸ, of this æon, age or world, &c. Ver. 39: "The harvest is the end," τὸ αἰῶνος, of the æon or age. Ver. 40: "So will it be in the end," τὸ αἰῶνος τὸ τὸ, of this æon or age. Ver. 49: "So will it be in the end," τὸ αἰῶνος, of the æon or age. Matt. xxviii. 20: "Lo I am with you always to the end," τὸ αἰῶνος, of the æon or age. Luke xvi. 8: "For the sons," τὸ αἰῶνος τὸ τὸ, of this æon or age are more prudent. Rom. xii. 2: "Be not conformed according," τῷ αἰῶνι τὸ τῷ, to this æon or age. Tit. ii. 12: "Live soberly, righteously and piously," ἐν τῷ νῦν αἰῶνι, in this present æon or age. And also in the following passages: Matt. xii. 32, Mark iv. 19, Luke xx. 34, 1 Cor. viii. 13, 1 Cor. x. 11, Galat. i. 4, 1 Tim. vi. 17, 2 Tim. iv. 10, Heb. ix. 26.

That the terms Αἰων and αἰωνιος, often signify *limited* duration, is evident from the following passages.

Αἰων.

Exod. xxi. 6: "Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall bring him to the

door or the door-post, and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl, and he shall serve him, *εις τον αιωνα, for ever,*” that is, to the end of his life.

Eccles. i. 4: “One generation passeth away and another cometh; but the earth abideth, *εις τον αιωνα, for ever,*” not surely to eternity, but from generation to generation.

John viii. 35: “The slave abideth not in the house, *εις τον αιωνα, for ever*; the son abideth, *εις τον αιωνα, for ever.*” In Exodus xxi. 2, it is affirmed, that the slave was at liberty to leave his master’s house at the expiration of the sixth year; in the text it is said that he abideth not with his master for ever, because he serves him for so short a period, and his temporary residence in the house is contrasted with that of the son, who is said to abide in it for ever, not because his continuance there will never end, but because he enjoys a residence with his father for an indefinite and comparatively long period. This passage shews in a most striking manner, both the limited signification of this term, and the necessity of considering the subject to which it is applied, before we determine the length of duration it denotes.

John xiv. 16: “The Father will give you another comforter, that he may abide with you, *εις τον αιωνα, for ever,*” that is, as long as you live.

1 Cor. viii. 13: “ If food cause my brother to offend, I will not eat flesh, *εις τον αιωνα*, *for ever*,” during the whole course of my life.

To these the following passages may be added, 1 Sam. iii. 13, Micah iv. 7, Matt. xxiv. 3, John xiii. 8, Ephes. ii. 7, Heb. vi. 5.

That this term must be understood in a limited sense, is likewise evident from the fact, that the writers of the New Testament continually speak of different æons, and represent one æon as succeeding another. This mode of expression occurs in several passages which have already been quoted, and it is used upwards of twenty times in the New Testament, in all which places the phrase, *this æon*, necessarily stands opposed to some other æon.

For example, Ephes. i. 21: “ Far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only,” *εν τῷ αιωνι τῶτῳ*, *in this æon or age*, *αλλα και εν τῷ μελλοντι*, *but also in that which is to come*. Matt. xii. 32: “ And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him, but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him,” *οτε εν τῶτῳ τῷ αιωνι*, *neither in this æon or age*, *οτε εν τῷ μελλοντι*, *nor in that which is to come*: surely this cannot mean, neither in this eternity nor in the eternity to come.

We also read of the *end* of the æon. Matt.

xxviii. 20: “Lo I am with you always to the end,” *τὸ αἰῶνος*, *of the æon or age*; not surely to the end of eternity. We even read of the end of the æons, and a period of time is spoken of prior to their commencement. Thus this word admits of the existence of time previous to the commencement of the age which it describes, and of an end to the periods which it speaks of as yet to come.

But what is absolutely decisive of its limited signification, is the addition of *ἐτι* and *ἐπέκεινα*, to it in the following places.

Exod. xv. 18: “The Lord shall reign,” *τοῦ αἰῶνα, καὶ ἐπ’ αἰῶνα, καὶ ἐτι*, *from æon to æon, AND FARTHER.*

Dan. xii. 3: “And they that turn many to righteousness as the stars,” *εἰς τὰς αἰῶνας, καὶ ἐτι*, *through the æons, AND FARTHER.*

Micah iv. 5: “And we walk in the name of Jehovah our God,” *εἰς τοῦ αἰῶνα, καὶ ἐπέκεινα*, *through the æon, AND BEYOND IT.*

A patient inquirer into the genuine meaning of the phraseology of scripture, and very accurate critic, the late Mr. Simpson, makes the following observations on this term.* “*Αἰών* occurs about a hundred times in the New Testament, in seventy

* Essay on the Duration of a Future State of Punishments and Rewards, p. 17.

of which, at least, it is clearly used for a limited duration. In the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament also it is even *repeated*, and several times it is repeated *twice*, without meaning eternity, and in two instances signifies no longer a period than the life of one man only."

Αἰώνιος.

Gen. ix. 16: "And I will look upon the bow that I may remember, διαθηκην αἰώνιον, *the everlasting covenant* between God and all flesh upon the earth;" yet the world itself will have an end, and therefore, though this bow is said to be the testimonial of an *everlasting* covenant, yet it can possess only a limited duration.

Gen. xvii. 8, 13, 19: "And I will give unto thee and unto thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, εἰς κατασχεσιν αἰώνιον, *for an everlasting possession*. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised; and my covenant shall be in your flesh, εἰς διαθηκην αἰώνιον, *for an everlasting covenant*."

In this passage the land of Canaan is called an *everlasting* possession, and the covenant of circumcision an *everlasting* covenant; yet the land of Canaan will not exist through endless ages, and the covenant of circumcision is de-

clared in the New Testament to be already annulled.

Numb. xxv. 13: "He shall have it and his seed after him, even an everlasting covenant of priesthood," *διαθηκη αιωνια*, yet the genealogy of Phinehas and Aaron cannot now be traced.

Philem. 15: "He therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him, *αιωνιον*, *for ever*," that is, for his whole life only.

Exod. xl. 15: "And thou shalt anoint them as thou didst anoint their father, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office; *for their anointing shall SURELY be an EVERLASTING PRIESTHOOD.*" Compare this with Heb. vii. 12: "FOR THE PRIESTHOOD BEING CHANGED, there is made of necessity a change also of the law." Ver. 18: "For there is verily A DISANNULLING of the commandment going before, for the weakness and unprofitableness of it."

In the first of these passages, it is affirmed that Aaron's sons shall be established in an everlasting priesthood, and that the covenant made with them shall be without end; in the second it is declared, that this everlasting priesthood is changed, and this everlasting ordinance is now no more. Here then we have the express authority of scripture for saying, that an everlasting priesthood has come to an end, and that an everlasting covenant is disannulled.

Had the words which are here applied to the duration of Aaron's priesthood, been annexed to that of future punishment, how impossible would it have been deemed by many persons, to answer the argument it would have furnished in support of its endless duration! What stress would have been laid upon the word *surely*, and how often should we have heard it repeated in reply to every thing which might be advanced on the subject; yet we have the authority of the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews for affirming that the argument would have been totally fallacious!

Since then we read of the everlasting or æonian circumcision, and of the everlasting or æonian priesthood, it is evident that the term must have a limited signification; for we cannot possibly suppose these things to be endless, merely because they are said to be of æonian duration. The æon or age to which they related is gone; the æonian covenants and statutes are waxed old, and have disappeared, and Jesus Christ has introduced a new æon; but if we render the word *permanent, continual* or *lasting*, we shall be able to attach a scriptural and consistent meaning to it in every passage in which it occurs. Thus we shall have a just conception of the continual covenants of circumcision and priesthood, which continued during the Jewish

æon or age ; of the continual hills, which will continue during the æon or age of the world ; of the continual gospel, which will be preached during the æons or ages in which the Mediator is subjecting all things to himself, and reconciling them to the Father ; and of continual punishment, which will be inflicted until the wise, necessary and benevolent purposes of punishment are accomplished.

The same kind of observations may be applied to the phrases *for ever*, and *for ever and ever*. Εἰς αἰῶνα αἰῶνος, *for ever* is used to denote a limited period of duration in the following passages.

Ps. xxxvii. 29: “The righteous shall dwell in the land *for ever*,” that is, from generation to generation. Ps. lxi. 8: “I will sing praise to thy name *for ever*,” from one period of my life to another. Ps. cxxxii. 14: “This is my rest *for ever* ;” that is, from age to age.*

Εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα καὶ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τὸ αἰῶνος, *for ever and ever*, is employed to express limited duration in the following texts.

“Ps. xlviii. 14: ‘This God is our God *for ever and ever*,’ that is, from age to age, for he has long ceased to be the God of the Jews in the sense here intended. Ps. cxix. 44: ‘So shall I keep thy law continually, *for ever and*

* See Simpson’s Essay, pp. 17, 18.

ever,’ that is, through the several periods or ages of my life on earth. Ps. cxlv. 2: ‘I will praise thy name *for ever and ever,*’ that is, through every period of my life. Ps. cxlv. 21: ‘Let all flesh bless his holy name *for ever and ever,*’ that is, from age to age, or through every age. Ps. cxlviii. 6: ‘He hath established the heavens for ever and ever,’ that is, through all ages.” *

“It is an observation of the utmost importance, that when *αιων*, or *αιωνιος*, are applied to the future punishment of the wicked, they are never joined to life, immortality, incorruptibility, but are always connected with fire, or with that punishment, pain, destruction or second death, which is effected by means of fire. Now since fire, which consumes or decomposes other perishable bodies, is itself of a dissoluble or perishing nature, this intimates a limitation of the period of time.”†

It is probable also that one chief reason why the future punishment of the wicked is often denoted by the metaphor of fire, is because it was the agent which was generally employed in *purifying* other bodies.‡ Allusions are con-

* Simpson’s Essay, pp. 17, 18.

† Ibid. p. 22.

‡ It is true this metaphor is very frequently used to signify indignation and anger, as in Rev. xiv. 10, and Heb. x. 27, but

tinually made in scripture to this property of fire. Malachi iii. 2, 3 : “ But who may abide the day of his coming, and who shall stand when he appeareth ; for he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap ; and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.” Isaiah xlviii. 10 : “ Behold I have refined thee. I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.” Mark ix. 49 : “ For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt.” In this passage, which itself relates to future punishment, the double metaphor of salt and fire, appears to be used to signify the same thing, the corrective nature of punishment. 1 Peter i. 7 : “ That the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory, at the appearance of Jesus Christ.” Allusion to this property of fire is also made in the following passages. Ps. xii. 6 : “ The words of the Lord are pure words ; as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.” Matt. iii. 11, 12 : “ He shall baptize you with the Holy

the passages quoted above prove that it is also employed to denote the corrective nature of punishment.

Ghost and with fire; whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner: but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." The parallel passage in Luke iii. 17. Rev. iii. 18: "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear."

It appears, then, that since the terms, *αιων* and *αιωνιος*, are constantly applied to things which either have perished, or which must be destroyed, no argument can fairly be deduced from their use alone, in proof of the absolute eternity of future punishment, even although it should be allowed that some passages in which they occur denote duration without end.* Before

* That they are sometimes *connected with subjects* which have an endless duration must be admitted; for example, in some passages which relate to the glory of God. Rom. xvi. 27: "To the only wise God be glory, *εις τας αιωνας for ever.*" 1 Pet. iv. 11: "That by Jesus Christ God may be glorified, to whom be glory and dominion, *εις τας αιωνας των αιωνων, for ever and ever.*" 1 Tim. vi. 16: "To him who only hath immortality, be honour and dominion, *αιωνιον, everlasting.*" And in some passages which relate to the nature of the Divine Being. Rom. xvi. 26: "According to the commandment, *τα αιωνια Θεου, of the everlasting God.*" But it is evident that in these passages these words do not give the sense of endless to, but receive it from the subject to which they are applied.

their application to *this* subject can be conclusive, it must be shewn that there is something in the nature of punishment which requires that whenever they are annexed to it, they must necessarily denote endless duration; a task which it is not easy to accomplish, and the very attempt at which seems absurd: but even if it could be accomplished it would prove not that the nature of these terms gives the sense of eternity to punishment, but that the nature of punishment imparts it to these terms.

This foundation, then, of the doctrine of Endless Misery, and of Limited Punishment terminated by Destruction, is unstable and insufficient. These terms cannot establish the doctrine, that future punishment will be followed by a total extinction of conscious existence, because the only way in which they could favour this opinion, would be by proving that the *loss* sustained by the wicked is truly everlasting, and that in this most important sense their punishment may be said to be without end; but it has been shewn that these words do not prove the endless duration of punishment. Still less do they favour the doctrine of Endless Misery; for although the absolute eternity of punishment were fully established, it would by no means follow, that this punishment consists of unremitted and insupportable torments, because the substantive

connected with the adjective, which is translated eternal, does not signify misery, but punishment. It is not said that the wicked shall go away into everlasting torment; and though the term everlasting is connected with the metaphor of fire, yet this metaphor may signify something else besides *misery*, as has already been shewn; and at all events to attempt to establish such a tremendous doctrine, merely upon a figurative expression, is unwarrantable.

But though this word, when applied to future punishment, does not denote duration without end, yet it is expressive of a period, to the length of which we can set no limits, and which no thoughtful mind can contemplate without dismay. To the impenitent and obdurate sinner, who, in the midst of light and knowledge, with clear conceptions of his duty, and strong convictions of his obligations to obey it, has lived without God in the world, violated the laws of morality and religion, outraged the best affections of the heart, and trampled on the dearest interests of mankind, there must be a day of awful retribution. Though we cannot conceive more nobly of the Deity than to suppose that benignity constitutes the essence of his nature, yet from this very circumstance, he must punish the wicked with a necessary degree of severity. They carry in their own breast the sentence of

condemnation; they feel within themselves a terrible consciousness that they must suffer the just judgment of their crimes, and the dictate of their heart is the voice of God, announcing to them their future destiny. They cannot be happy. Were a seat prepared for them at the right hand of God, were angels and archangels, and the spirits of the just made perfect to encircle them, and were the most rapturous joys of heaven offered to their acceptance, they would still be wretched. The very bosom of enjoyment would be to them a thorny pillow; for the turbulence of malignant passion would even there disturb their repose: like those miserable pageants of grandeur, who live in gorgeous palaces, and whom mirth and joy encircle, while some foul crime weighs heavy on their conscience, the paleness of whose cheek the surrounding splendour does but deepen, and whose quivering lip moves but the more tremulously for the pleasure which invites their participation: anguish and despair are in their hearts.

Every fault we commit *must* involve us in suffering. Misconduct and misery are connected together by a law as steady and invariable in its operation, as that which regulates the motions of the planets. If we die without having acquired virtuous and pious habits, and with hearts attached to criminal pleasures, there is no alter-

native, we must necessarily suffer an anguish, which both reason and revelation assure us must in every case be dreadful, but the degree and the duration of which can be determined only by the nature, the number, and the aggravation of our sins.

With an evidence which no reasonable mind can resist, and with deep and impressive solemnity, the Scriptures assure us that after death cometh the judgment; that all mankind must appear before the tribunal of Jesus Christ; that they must be judged according to the deeds done in the body, whether they have been good or evil; that the virtuous of every nation, kindred, people and religion, shall be admitted to a state of pure and exalted happiness, where all their faculties shall be enlarged, where every object calculated to exercise and satisfy them shall abound, where every natural and moral imperfection, and therefore every painful sensation, shall be for ever excluded, and where, existing in immortal vigour, they shall be continually rising higher and higher in the scale of excellence and enjoyment, till they attain a measure of both, which at present we can neither calculate nor comprehend. But they assure us too, that the wicked shall be doomed to a state of suffering, awful in its nature, and lasting in its duration; that they shall be excluded from the habitations

of the just ; that between them and the virtuous a great gulph shall be fixed ; that no song of joy shall be heard in these regions of remorse ; that weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth shall be there ; and that the recollection of the sins they have committed, the mercies they have abused, and the privileges they have lost, shall fill them with intolerable anguish.

The doctrine of Universal Restoration not only teaches these solemn and momentous truths, but inculcates them in a manner the best adapted to convince the understanding, and to affect the heart. It is not this doctrine therefore which cries to those who are at ease in Zion, “ Peace, peace, when there is no peace ;” it is not this doctrine which says to the wicked, “ ye shall not surely die ;” which relaxes the ties of moral obligation, or promises an exemption from punishment, whatever dispositions are indulged, or whatever crimes are committed.

With a solemnity peculiar to itself, it assures the wicked that they can enjoy no rest ; that they must be miserable as long as they are criminal ; and if there be any thing affecting in tenderness, or persuasive in benignity, that doctrine must have a peculiarly moral tendency which inculcates that the suffering they endure will induce an abhorrence of its cause, and that purified from sin, repentant and reclaimed, in

love with holiness and goodness, and looking with humble, penitent and supplicating hearts to the Father of mercies for forgiveness, he will have compassion upon them, speak to them the words of peace, and take them to his bosom as his children; that even as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord will have compassion upon them that fear him, knowing their frame, and remembering that they are but dust.

“ I have taken no pleasure in your suffering,” may we conceive our heavenly Father to say to his penitent children, when the discipline under which he will place them shall have accomplished its design. “ I have chastised you only with a view to correct the evil which was in you. You feel and deplore your error. You are fitted to partake of true happiness: come then for there is room; this my son was dead and is alive, was lost and is found” !

If at that moment this reclaimed child should have the feelings of a man, and testify in human language the sensations of his soul, will he not fall down before this most lovely Being, and in a rapture of adoring gratitude, exclaim—“ Thy wisdom and thy goodness have prevailed! With penitence I return unto thee, from whom I ought never to have departed! Father, receive thy child. The eternity of happiness thou givest me shall speak thy praise!”

What a memorable and affecting spectacle must such a reconciliation afford to the whole rational creation ! How great must be its moral influence ! How much better must it answer all the purposes of justice as well as benevolence, than the condemnation of millions of millions of rational beings to a total loss of conscious existence, or to the endurance of the most excruciating torments, which can accomplish no possible end, except that of sinking the unhappy victims deeper and deeper in sin and misery ! Which spectacle is most worthy of the God of love, and in which is most apparent the finger of infinite wisdom, power and benevolence ?

SECTION II.

OF THE APPLICATION OF THE SAME WORD
TO THE HAPPINESS OF THE RIGHTEOUS,
AND THE PUNISHMENT OF THE WICKED.

SINCE it is evident that the terms eternal, everlasting, for ever, and for ever and ever, denote a limited duration, and therefore that their application to future punishment cannot prove its absolute eternity, it is farther urged in support of the doctrines of Endless Misery, and of Limited Punishment terminated by Destruction, that the same word is applied, both to the happiness of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked ; and that, as in the one case this term is always supposed to convey the idea of happiness without end, so in the other it must in all fair and reasonable construction be allowed to denote endless loss or suffering.

The proper and full reply to this objection is, that the application of *αιωνιος*, to the happiness of the righteous, and the punishment of the wicked, cannot of itself prove the absolute eternity of either. If the endless duration of the happiness of the righteous be established beyond doubt,

the proof is derived from other sources, and does not depend upon this term.

The passage on which the present objection is chiefly founded, occurs in Matt. xxv. 46: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." Although the same word is here employed to express the duration both of future reward and punishment, yet the difference between the nature of the two subjects, the difference between the substantives to which the adjective is applied, and the clear testimony of other passages of scripture, which relate to the final destiny of mankind, all concur to shew that in the former case it signifies an endless, and in the latter a limited duration.

There is the greatest possible difference between the nature of the subjects to which the term is applied. When an everlasting life of happiness is promised to the righteous, the subject naturally leads us to believe, that its duration will be without end, because we can conceive of nothing which should bring it to a termination. There is every reason to believe that the same motive which induced the Deity to impart it for a very protracted period, will lead him to render it endless. The happiness of which the pious will be in possession in a future state is the attainment of the

object for which they were created, the completion of the design of their existence : as long as they continue to enjoy, they promote the benevolent purpose of their Creator, and therefore their felicity has in itself the promise of immortality. Happiness, too, is an eternal principle ; it is coeval with the Deity, and will be lasting as himself. But misery is in every respect the reverse. It is not the object for which mankind were brought into being ; its prevalence is not the fulfilment of the designs of the Deity : as long as it exists, his purposes cannot be completed ; it is not itself an end, it is only the means to an end, which alone is sufficient to prove that it cannot be eternal, but must cease as soon as it has accomplished its allotted work. There is, therefore, such a difference between the nature of happiness and misery, as necessarily leads to the conclusion, that their duration will be different. The term, *αιωνιος*, applied to the first, *derives from it* the signification of endless duration ; applied to the second, it is *restricted* by it to a limited period.

There is an equal difference between the nature of the substantives to which this word is applied. Thus, in this very passage, when it relates to the righteous, it is connected with *ζωη*, a substantive, which signifies life ; when it respects the wicked, it is joined with *πολασις*, a

term which invariably denotes *corrective* punishment.* That the phrase everlasting, or continual life, when applied to the pious, may signify an immortal existence, it is reasonable to believe, because the nature of the subject countenances the opinion, and it is favoured by many passages of scripture: that the expression everlasting punishment, or lasting correction, when applied to the wicked, denotes a limited punishment, it is impossible to deny, because a corrective cannot be an endless punishment; because the very hypothesis is incompatible with the design of the divine government; because it is contrary to the general tenor of the New Testament, and because it deprives many of its most striking and animating expressions of all their beauty and truth.

Nor does the affixing of a different meaning to the same word, occurring twice in the same sentence, afford any objection to this interpretation. The difference in the subject in the one

* “ The word here rendered punishment, properly signifies correction for the benefit of the offender. And the word translated everlasting, is often used to express a long but indefinite duration. This text, therefore, so far from giving countenance to the harsh doctrine of eternal misery, is rather favourable to the more pleasing and more probable hypothesis of the ultimate restitution of the wicked to virtue and to happiness.” Improved Version, note in loc.

case and the other is so manifest, as clearly to point out ~~its~~ different signification ; so that if the Scriptures afforded no example of a similar repetition of the same word in a twofold sense, it ought not to induce the least doubt of the validity of the principle upon which the distinction in the present passage is established. But the fact is, that there are several places in which the same word is applied twice in the same sentence, with a dissimilarity as to the extent of duration it denotes, exactly similar to this. For example,

Hab. iii. 6 : “ And the *everlasting* mountains were scattered, and the perpetual hills did bow ; his ways are *everlasting*.” In this passage the same word is applied to the duration of mountains, and to the duration of the ways of God : in the latter part of the sentence it signifies absolute eternity ; in the former it must denote limited duration. This passage affords another striking illustration of the principle, that it is the nature of the subject in relation to which the term *αιωνιος* is used, that determines the length of duration it must be understood to denote. When it relates to the Deity, it derives from his nature the sense of absolute eternity ; when it expresses the duration of mountains, it is restricted by their nature to a limited signification.

Rom. xvi. 25, 26 : “ According to the revela-

tion of the mystery which was kept secret, *χρονοις αιωνιοις*, in the times of the ages, but has now been made manifest, according to the commandment, *τῷ αιωνιῷ Θεῷ*, of the everlasting God.” Tit. i. 2: “In hope, *ζωῆς αιωνιῆς*, of *eternal* life, which God who cannot lie promised,” *πρὸ χρονων αιωνιων*, *before the times of the ages*, or *before the world began*, or *before the ancient dispensations*.

These examples are abundantly sufficient to prove that the argument in support of the endless duration of punishment, founded upon *this* application of the term, is also fallacious.

SECTION III.

OF THE ARGUMENT IN FAVOUR OF ENDLESS MISERY, DERIVED FROM THE PHRASE UNQUENCHABLE FIRE.

THE following passages have been deemed decisive proofs of the endless duration of the misery of the wicked.

Matt. xxv. 41: “Depart from me ye cursed *εἰς τὸ πῦρ τὸ αἰώνιον* into eternal or lasting fire.” Jude 7: “As Sodom and Gomorrah are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance, *πῦρος αἰώνιος*, of eternal fire.” This fire has been extinguished long ago. Matt. iii. 12: “But he will burn the chaff, *πῦρ ἀσβέστω*, with unquenchable fire.” Mark ix. 43—49: “And if thy hand cause thee to offend, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, *into the fire that never shall be quenched*, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot cause thee to offend, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, *into the fire that never shall be quenched*. And if thine eye cause thee to offend, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of

God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire, *where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched* ; for every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt."

It is argued that our Lord in this passage repeats five times that the fire into which the wicked are cast, shall never be quenched ; that three times he speaks of hell as a place where the worm dieth not, and that still farther to shew the perpetuity of the sufferings of the wicked, he adds, for every one shall be salted with fire. As it is the property of salt to preserve, it is argued, that the inference justly deducible from this awful intimation is, that this fire, while it torments its unhappy victims, shall not put a period to their existence, but, contrary to its natural effect, continue them in being.

A careful examination of this passage will shew that this argument is founded upon a false interpretation of the metaphors which are here employed, and that it is altogether fallacious. Jesus speaks of the wicked as being cast into the valley of Hinnom, into the unquenchable fire, where the worm dieth not. Yet "in the valley of Hinnom the worm died when its food failed, and the pile on which human sacrifices were burnt to Moloch was often extinguished." *Newcome.*

“ These emblematical images, expressing hell, were in use among the Jews before our Saviour’s time. The son of Sirach says, vii. 7, ‘ The vengeance of the ungodly is fire and worms.’ Judith xvi. 17: ‘ The Lord will take vengeance on the nations, &c. in the day of judgment, in putting fire and worms in their flesh.’” *Lowth’s* Note on Isaiah lxvi. 24.

When it is said that every one shall be salted with fire, or every sacrifice is salted with salt, this is to be understood, “ not literally as the law requires, Levit. ii. 13, but figuratively, with the salt of divine assistance and instruction. Salt being a preservative of food from hasty corruption, was among the Jews an emblem of virtue and knowledge, by which the mind is purified. Col. iv. 6: ‘ Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt.’” *Newcome.*

That the phrase unquenchable fire, upon which so much stress is always laid in the argument for Endless Misery, does not denote a fire which shall never cease, is most certain. The following passages afford irresistible evidence, that it is constantly used in the Scriptures in a limited sense.

Jer. xvii. 27: “ But if ye will not hearken unto me, to hallow the sabbath day, and not to

bear a burthen, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath day, *then will I kindle fire in the gates thereof*, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, **AND IT SHALL NOT BE QUENCHED.**" Yet the same prophet predicts that Jerusalem shall be rebuilt, chap. xxx. 18, &c.

Ezek. xx. 45—48: "Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me saying, Son of man, set thy face towards the south, and say to the forest of the south, Hear the word of the Lord. Behold I will kindle a fire in thee, and it shall devour every green tree in thee, and every dry tree, **THE FLAMING FLAME SHALL NOT BE QUENCHED**, and all faces from the south to the north shall be burned therein, and all flesh shall see that I the Lord have kindled it; **IT SHALL NOT BE QUENCHED.**"

If it be supposed that these menaces were actually executed upon Jerusalem, and that when this devoted city was destroyed, the prophecy was literally accomplished, it must be admitted that the fire which consumed it is already extinguished, and that therefore the scriptural meaning of an unquenchable fire is not one which has no termination. If these dreadful threatenings be more justly considered as figurative, it must be allowed that they express the divine displeasure, and the severity of the

punishment which is inflicted on the disobedient, but not that they determine any thing relative to its duration.

Isaiah xxxiv. 9—11: “And the streams thereof (of the land of Idumea), shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch. IT SHALL NOT BE QUENCHED NIGHT NOR DAY; *the smoke thereof shall go up for ever*: from generation to generation it shall be waste; none shall pass through it *for ever*. But the cormorant and the bittern shall possess it; the owl also and the raven shall dwell in it: and he shall stretch out upon it the line of confusion, and the stone of emptiness.”

No fire, with which the wicked are threatened, is expressed in language so strong as this, yet it is obvious that this phraseology cannot denote a fire which shall never end; for if any one can believe that Idumea was really turned into pitch and brimstone, and set on fire, yet it is impossible to suppose, that it will continue burning through the ages of eternity; and if the denunciation be interpreted in a figurative sense, the calamities it threatens must be understood to be of a temporal nature, and therefore of limited duration.

Simpson concludes his examination of the term *πυρ*, fire, in general, and of these passages

in particular, with the following admirable observations.

“ *All* these several metaphors, by which future punishment is described, will not admit of being understood literally. For if thus interpreted, some of them would clash with others. Nor is there any proper authority for taking any *one* of them in preference to the rest, and explaining them so as to accord with that which we select as the rule of interpretation. We are compelled, therefore, to look out for some key to the explanation of them all, so as to be consistent with each other. If any one of these figurative representations has united with it a plain term that will accord, not only with the single figure with which it is conjoined, but also with the various other figures that are employed upon this subject in the New Testament; and especially if it coincides with the actual explanation and use of the very same figures in the writings of the Jewish prophets, we may fairly interpret all the figurative expressions by this plain one.

“ Now the words *anger* and *indignation* that occur in Rev. xiv. 10, Heb. x. 27, have a plain and distinct meaning. ‘ The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation, and he shall be tormented with fire

and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the lamb.' All the other terms that are employed to describe the grievous future punishment of the wicked, are proper figurative representations of the dreadful effects of divine indignation against sinners ; and, considered in this light, they entirely agree with each other. The Old Testament was both the religious and the civil code of the Jews, and the Greek translation of it was commonly used by them in the time of our Lord and his apostles. They therefore adopted many expressions from the books contained in it. Now the Jewish prophets, it is well known, described the Deity himself, and all his operations and proceedings, in a bold and most highly figurative style. The similitudes which we are now considering, they often employed, in representing the great displeasure of the Most High against sin, and the painful chastisement of death that he will inflict *in this world*, upon those who transgress his laws and abuse his favours. The metaphors of fire, unquenchable fire, and their worm not dying, as well as other figures, are thus applied in the following texts, in which there are plain expressions, that lead to the true interpretation of the figurative.

“ Deut. xxxii. 22—25: ‘ A fire is kindled in mine *anger*, and shall burn unto the lowest

hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains. I will heap mischiefs upon them: I will spend mine arrows upon them: they shall be burnt with hunger and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter destruction; I will also send the teeth of beasts upon them, with the portion of serpents of the dust; the sword without and terror within, shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling also with the man of grey hairs.' Isaiah lxvi. 14—16: 'The *indignation* of Jehovah shall be known towards his enemies. For behold Jehovah will come with his fire and with his chariots, like a whirlwind, to render his *anger* with fury, and his rebuke like flames of fire. For by fire and by his sword will Jehovah plead with all flesh, and the slain of the Lord shall be many.' Ver. 24: 'And they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: *for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched*, and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.' Here dead carcasses are spoken of as being devoured by worms or destroyed by fire. This, therefore, does not imply, but excludes the idea of their feeling pain. See also Isaiah v. 24, 25; xxx. 27—33; Ps. lxxxix. 46, &c.

“ From the above quotations out of the Old

Testament, it appears, that the metaphors in the New Testament, which we are considering, must, in the strongest sense, be understood, of grievous suffering and destruction by death. The wicked, then, are described as dying again after severe punishment in the world to come. There is no passage in which it is said that they shall be immortal, or shall remain in a state of torment without dying. We have no sufficient ground, then, for maintaining that the punishment of sinners will have no termination, nor for affirming that the second death, which we are assured they shall undergo, will put a final period to their existence. These are conclusions upon which consequences of too great moment depend, to admit of their being deduced from figurative language alone. Plain and explicit terms seem indispensably requisite to justify such sentiments."

SECTION IV.

OF THE ARGUMENT IN FAVOUR OF ENDLESS MISERY, FOUNDED ON THE CASE OF JUDAS.

THE language of our Lord respecting the unhappy person who betrayed him, has been supposed to furnish a strong argument in support of the endless misery of the wicked. “The Son of Man goeth as it is written of him; but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.” Matt. xxvi. 24.

Should a period ever arrive when Judas will be restored to happiness, our Lord, it is argued, could not with truth have affirmed, that it would have been good for him if he had not been born; because, though the suffering inflicted on him be ever so severe and protracted, if it be the means of correcting his evil disposition, and preparing him for immortal felicity, his existence must upon the whole be an incalculable blessing.

To this it is common to reply, and the answer is abundantly sufficient, that the language of our Lord is proverbial, and that no sober mind will venture to rest such a tremendous doctrine upon

the solitary use of a Jewish proverb. The phrase, is often used proverbially, both by sacred and profane authors. Simpson observes, that it is often found in the Talmudical writers. See *Wolfius's* and *Lightfoot's* Note on Matt. xxvi. 24; also *Grotius* in locum et *Alberti* Observ. Philologicæ, &c., who produce several instances of similar modes of expression. To the truth of these observations Dr. Gill, who was certainly in no degree hostile to the doctrine of endless misery, or to any other orthodox opinion, bears his decided testimony. In his notes on this and the parallel passage in Mark, he says, "This is a rabbinical phrase frequently used in one form or other, and sometimes as our Lord spake it: it is applied to such as speak false and lying words, and regard not the glory of their Creator." *

That this kind of language was common among the Jews, we have abundant proof in several parts of scripture. Job, in the anguish of his heart, exclaims, "Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night wherein it was said, There is a man child conceived. Let that day be darkness; let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it,

* The Improved Version gives as a conjectural meaning of this phrase, "It would have been good for him (the traitor) if that man (the Son of Man) had never been born." See note in loc.

because it shut not up the doors of my mother's womb, nor hid sorrow from mine eyes. Why died I not from the womb? Then should I have been still and quiet. I should have slept." Job iii. 3.

Jeremiah uses, if possible, still more strong and bitter language. Jeremiah xiv. 14—18: *
 "Cursed be the day wherein I was born. Let not the day wherein my mother bore me be blessed. Cursed be the man that brought tidings to my father, saying, A man child is born unto thee, making him very glad. Let that man be as the cities which Jehovah overthrew and repented not: and let him hear the cry in the morning and the shouting at noon-tide, because he slew me not from the womb, or that my mother might have been my grave. Wherefore came I out from the womb to see labour and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame?"

If then Job could use such language, while enduring suffering which was indeed very severe, but which was only of a temporal nature, and which cannot be supposed to have arisen in any degree from the apprehension of endless misery; and if Jeremiah could adopt it for no other reason than because he suffered a little disgrace

* See Blayney's note on this passage.

in a good cause; with how much greater justice, and with what solemn and impressive energy might our Lord apply it to Judas, whose crime was of so deep a dye, and whose punishment must necessarily be so great! Being acquainted with the Jewish Scriptures, and accustomed to this kind of language, his hearers must often have heard similar expressions applied to persons, whose sufferings were trifling compared with those of the traitor.

SECTION V.

OF THE ARGUMENT IN FAVOUR OF ENDLESS MISERY, DERIVED FROM THE LANGUAGE WHICH IS USED CONCERNING THE SIN AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST.

“**W**HEREFORE all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man it shall be forgiven him : but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.” Matt. xii. 31, 32.

This passage has been supposed to afford a decisive argument in support of the endless duration of the punishment of the wicked : but if this be the case, the proof must depend either upon the phrase, “ Whosoever speaketh a word against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven him ;” or upon that which immediately follows, “ neither in this world nor in the world to come.”

With regard to the first, it may be admitted that this dreadful threatening will be executed to the very letter, and yet the concession will

afford no proof of the endless duration of punishment. Whoever is guilty of this sin may not be forgiven, he may suffer all the punishment due to his crime; that punishment may be protracted and terrible, and yet it may not be endless, because it is one thing for punishment to be great and durable, and another to be without end. The reasoning which is founded upon this text, instead of establishing any thing, assumes the point in dispute. The passage is adduced to shew, that the punishment inflicted upon unpardoned sin is endless, yet all which it affirms, taken literally and in its largest sense, is, that there is one sin which will not be forgiven: so that the precise thing to be proved, namely, that unpardoned sin will be punished with endless suffering, is taken for granted.

The phrase, “neither in this age nor in the age to come,” is so far from denoting endless duration, that it is itself a decisive proof that expressions of this kind do not signify proper eternity; for if the contrary be maintained, the correct rendering of this passage must be, neither in this eternity, nor in the eternity to come.

The language of our Lord in this text, refers without doubt to the conduct of the Pharisees, who, when they could not deny the reality of his miracles, attributed the power by which he performed them not to God, but to the agency

of evil beings. He appeals to his works as a proof that he is come forth from God ; but he is assisted by a very different being, say they. He casteth out demons by Beelzebub the prince of the demons. Nothing could discover more shocking malignity. Now, says our Lord, every kind of calumny is a crime of great enormity, and pardoned by God with the utmost difficulty : but to speak evil of God himself, by attributing his beneficent and miraculous works to a wicked being, is an offence of the deepest dye, and much more difficult to be pardoned. This appears to be what our Lord affirms, and all which he affirms in this passage.

If this be a just interpretation of these words, they afford an example of a mode of expression which is very frequently employed by the Hebrews, and of which we have several instances in the Scriptures. When they would say that one thing is more excellent, easy or difficult than another, they often positively affirm the one and deny the other. In this manner God is represented, Matt. ix. 13, as saying, “ I will have mercy and not sacrifice,” meaning by this, not that sacrifices were in themselves disagreeable to him, but that acts of beneficence were more excellent and acceptable. So Matthews chap. v. 18, says, “ Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall by no means

pass away from the law, till all be accomplished," which Luke explains, chap. xvi. 17, by saying, "it is *easier* for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one tittle of the law to fail." In the same manner Christ, in the text, seems to say, that every other kind of evil-speaking may be forgiven, but that to speak evil of God or his spirit shall not be pardoned, when no more is intended, than that it is more difficult to obtain the forgiveness of the one offence than of the other.*

There are other expositors, however, who plead for understanding these words literally, and suppose them to declare that to speak evil of the spirit of God in the manner before mentioned, is an unpardonable offence, either because the persons who are guilty of it, rejecting the evidence of miracles, resist the strongest motive to repentance which God can give, or because the crime is of too enormous a nature to come within the reach of divine mercy. But it does not seem probable in itself, that any sin committed by creatures of such limited capacities as we are, can be so heinous as to leave no hope of pardon, when sincerely repented of; nor does it appear that our Lord himself thought it

* See Kenrick's Exposition of the Historical Writings of the New Testament, note in loc.

impossible for the divine clemency to be extended to it; for when he was put to death by the Pharisees, who had been guilty of this offence, he prays that God would forgive them: to which it may be added, that a few verses before we find these Pharisees ask for a sign, and Christ tells them that one shall be given them, even that of the prophet Jonas; but why should their request be granted, except for their conviction that they might obtain forgiveness? *

The preceding observations are founded on the remark of Grotius on this passage, who says, “Our Lord could not mean in the former part of the sentence, in which he speaks of other sins and blasphemies, to affirm absolutely that they shall be forgiven without repentance, because this is not true; for many of them we are told will not be forgiven, but will incur their due punishment. Therefore this is a Hebrew form of speech, signifying that all other sins and blasphemies shall *sooner* be forgiven than the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. For it was common among the Jews to say, this thing shall be and this shall not be, merely to express the greater difficulty of effecting the latter than the former, without affirming any thing absolutely of either.”

* See Kenrick, in loc.

Whitby seems to think that the sin against the Holy Spirit, probably refers to blaspheming the spirit which fell on the apostles at the day of Pentecost. See Appendix to Matthew xii., with whom Doddridge, on Matthew xii. 31—32, agrees. If this opinion be well founded, it cannot be said that this sin shall not be forgiven, because those who had committed it were exhorted to repent that they might obtain pardon. Acts ii. 13, 38, viii. 17—24.*

It is obvious, that the sin against the Holy Ghost consists in a wilful and obstinate ascription of the miraculous powers of Jesus Christ to demoniacal agency. “Verily,” says our Lord, Mark iii. 28, “all sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation; *because they said he had an unclean spirit.*” Matt. xii. 24: “This man doth not cast out demons, but by Beelzebub the prince of the demons.” These last words place the matter beyond doubt.

He who, when he saw the miracles of Jesus, and could not resist the conviction that they

* See Simpson's Essay on Future Punishment, p. 80.

were real, refused to yield to his authority, but attributed his works to the agency of demons, rejected the strongest possible evidence of the truth of his religion.* Refusing to profit by the best means which the wisdom of the Deity had devised to make him pure and happy, there was every reason to believe that he must leave this world utterly unprepared for the next, and suffer the penalty of unrepentant guilt, which will be the more dreadful, in that his eyes will be opened to all the enormity of his crime. This, indeed, will form a dreadful aggravation of the misery of the wicked in the state of punishment. At present, the mind has a wonderful power of changing at will the appearances of objects, so that it can bring itself to view even the most horrible crimes not only without disgust, but with pleasure: but in the state of discipline, in which the Parent of mankind will hereafter place his offending offspring, this deceptive power will not be permitted to be exercised. The veil will be torn from every eye, and all

* “ They who ascribed the miracles of Jesus and his apostles to demoniacal agency, resisted the strongest possible evidence of the truth of the Christian religion, and were therefore incapable of being converted to the belief of it.” Improved Version, in loc. See also Dr. Samuel Clarke’s Paraphrase of this passage, and Macknight, in loc.

objects will appear in their real colours. Then, it will not be Nero reflecting upon his crimes with the blunted feelings of the man, who could cause hundreds of innocent beings to be wrapt in shirts of pitch, and setting them on fire, mingle in the crowd of flaming victims, that he might have a nearer view of their anguish ; but it will be Nero contemplating his wanton cruelty with the sensibility of Howard, with the just valuation of goodness of the Apostle Paul. Is it possible to believe, that this altered view and feeling will produce no beneficial effect ; will excite no abhorrence of sin, no desire to burst from its thralldom and be free, or that exciting such a dislike and wish, they will be for ever unavailing ?

The degree and the duration of punishment necessary to produce the salutary change, must be different in different persons. The exact proportion it is the part of infinite wisdom to determine. No more than is requisite will be inflicted : as much as is necessary must be sustained. Some must be beaten with few, and others with many stripes ; and we learn from the passage we have been considering, that there is in the sin against the Holy Ghost a malignity, which will render its eradication more difficult than that of any other crime. In the language

which is used concerning it there is much that is awful and affecting, but nothing that is impossible or irrational, and it is not for us, by giving a false interpretation of it, to render it both.

SECTION VI.

OF THE ARGUMENT IN FAVOUR OF ENDLESS MISERY, DEDUCED FROM THE PARABLE OF THE GREAT GULPH.

THE parable of Lazarus and the rich man has often been adduced in proof of the endless misery of the wicked. It is necessary therefore to notice it, though no intelligent person can lay much stress upon it. Abraham is represented as saying to the rich man, Luke xvi. 26, "Between us and you there is a great gulph fixed, so that they which would pass from thence to you cannot, neither can they pass to us that would come from thence."

All which this passage proves is, that the righteous and the wicked will be placed in different states, and that the one cannot pass to that of the other. Respecting the duration of these states it determines nothing.

Indeed, the circumstances mentioned in the parable are favourable to the opinion, that future punishment will be corrective. The rich man is represented as enjoying many privileges which he abused. He had great wealth, but like too many who are entrusted with this means of dif-

fusing happiness, he possessed an unfeeling heart. There is no scriptural authority for representing him as utterly profligate and abandoned, and to give such an exhibition of his character is to pervert the design of this most instructive lesson, which is to admonish us, not that a monster of wickedness shall be punished in the other world, but that the man who, though not chargeable with doing much ill, does little or no good, and lives, though not perhaps an intemperate, a sensual life; who, careless about the situation of others, exists only for the indulgence of his own appetites and his own vanity, shall not escape punishment.*

The great vice of his character was the want of diffusive benevolence. He felt no compassion for the misery of others. Even though he saw a fellow-creature ready to perish with disease and hunger, it melted not his soul to charity. He dies, and is placed under the painful discipline, which is necessary to change his selfish disposition. In hell he lifts up his eyes being in torments. He supplicates for mercy; he prays that Lazarus may be sent to dip the tip of his finger in water to cool his parched tongue;

* See Campbell's note on this passage, in which will be found some excellent practical observations on this beautiful and impressive parable.

his request is refused, and finding that he can obtain no mitigation of his own suffering, what does he next solicit? “ I pray that thou wouldest send him to my father’s house ; for I have five brethren ; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.”

The very disposition then, for which he is punished, is already beginning to be rectified ; the discipline under which he is placed is taking effect ; he has ceased to care only for himself ; a spark of benevolence is kindled in his heart. Instead of imbibing what is generally represented as the spirit of the devil and his angels, from having associated with them ; instead of soliciting permission to go and beguile his brethren to this place of torment, he is animated by a disposition of the purest benevolence ; he, who a little while ago was so insensible to the suffering of others, that the extremes of disease and hunger could not excite in his bosom a single sensation of pity.

This parable therefore, which does not allude to the duration of punishment, but which gives a just exhibition of the tendency of the chastisement of a wise and benevolent being, countenances the doctrine, that the wicked will be ultimately restored to virtue and to happiness.

SECTION VII.

OF THE OPINION THAT THERE WILL BE NO
SUCCESSIVE DURATION IN A FUTURE
STATE.

IT is not easy to account for the general prevalence of the opinion that time will end with the present state, and eternity commence with the next. The notion itself is very obscure. As far as it is intelligible, the common idea of eternity seems to be that of a vast gulph, in which day and night, time itself, and all successive duration, are swallowed up. With this is generally connected the opinion, that after this state commences, every thing must continue as it is without the possibility of change, and that therefore the wickedness and misery of the impenitent must necessarily remain unalterable.

There is, however, no reason to believe that successive duration will terminate with the present life. Indeed, it is by no means easy to conceive, how there can be duration without succession; at all events, no one can form a clear conception of it, and to ground such a doctrine as that of endless misery on a notion

so unintelligible, can be justified by nothing but the extreme exigency of the case.

The only passage of scripture which seems to countenance this opinion is Rev. x. 6: "The angel swore—that there should be time no longer:" but the context demonstrates that this language cannot signify, that eternity shall commence, if by this be meant endless duration without succession; for in the very next verse another angel is spoken of as succeeding the sixth, in terms which are incompatible with this idea. Ver. 7: "But *in the days* of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished."

The phrase in the received text is *οκ εσαυ επι*: the reading of the Alexandrian, Ephrem, and other approved MSS. adopted by Griesbach, is *οκετι εσαυ*. The Improved Version renders the passage in the following manner.—Ver. 5, 6, 7: "And the angel whom I saw standing upon the sea and upon the land, lifted up his right hand to heaven, and swore by Him who liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven and the things which are therein, and the earth and the things which are therein, and the sea and the things which are therein, *that the time would not be yet*, but *in the days* of the blast of the seventh angel, when he shall sound his trumpet, and the mystery of God hath been finished, as he hath

proclaimed the glad tidings to his servants the prophets.”

Wakefield renders the passage, “that there should be no longer delay,” with whom Dr. Gill agrees, who gives the following exposition of the text. “The words will bear to be rendered, as some have observed, that there should be delay no longer; that is, no delay of the coming and kingdom of Christ; though the bridegroom has tarried, he will come, and will not tarry beyond the time the angel swears to: every seal of the sealed book (chap. v. 1,) is a delay of and stop upon the open appearance of Christ’s kingdom; and the opening of every seal is an advance to it: and when the sixth seal was opened and Paganism destroyed, and Christianity spread throughout the empire, the kingdom of Christ might have been expected to have appeared, but there was a seventh seal to be opened, which was a stop upon it, and which, when opened, brought ruin and destruction upon the Christian empire, both western and eastern, under the six first trumpets; and till the seventh sounds there will be a delay of Christ’s kingdom, but when that sounds there will be no more delay.”

The language of scripture is directly hostile to the notion, that in a future state there will be no successive duration. The Greek phrases, by which the duration of a future state is expressed,

necessarily imply it; as, *εις αιωνα*, *for an age*:
εις τας αιωνας των αιωνων, *for ages of ages*, &c.

Such are the passages, which are commonly adduced from scripture in proof of the endless misery of the wicked. Those which have been considered are all which are generally deemed conclusive or important. However frequently they may be repeated or confidently urged, they are totally insufficient to establish this gloomy and unscriptural opinion.

CHAPTER II.

OF THE ARGUMENTS CONCEIVED TO FAVOUR THE DOCTRINE OF ENDLESS MISERY, WHICH ARE NOT FOUNDED ON THE EXPRESS DECLARATIONS OF SCRIPTURE.

SECTION I.

OF THE INFINITE EVIL OF SIN.

ONE of the arguments urged in support of the doctrine of endless misery is so obviously fallacious, that it scarcely deserves a serious consideration; namely, that sin is an infinite evil, and therefore deserves an infinite punishment.

That sin is not only an evil, but the greatest which can possibly attach to a moral and accountable being, is an indisputable truth; but that the slightest transgression is an infinite offence and deserves an infinite punishment, are positions to which neither reason nor revelation afford the shadow of support.

The advocates of this extraordinary opinion endeavour to establish it by an argument no less singular than the doctrine itself. Sin, say they, is an infinite evil, because it is committed

against an infinite person. The heinousness of an offence, they contend, increases in proportion to the dignity of the personage, against whom it is committed; hence, a crime against a king is always visited with greater severity of punishment, than an offence against an ordinary person. Since, therefore, God is infinite, and since every sin is an offence against God, every sin is an infinite evil.

The full reply to this reasoning is, that it is not rank and station which aggravate a crime, but its tendency to occasion misery. An offence against a king, it is true, is of a greater magnitude, and is punished with more severity, than the injurious treatment of an ordinary person; but the reason is, that an offence against a king is likely to be attended with worse consequences than one against a private individual. If a king be treated with insult or injustice, a whole nation may be injured and thrown into commotion. In the one case the evil attaches to a single individual, in the other to millions of persons: in the one case, therefore, it is as much greater than the other, as the sum of an evil which extends to millions exceeds that which attaches only to a single individual.

Were sin an infinite evil, there could be no degree in transgression: for when speaking of infinity, it is absurd to talk of greater or less.

All human actions, therefore, all the language of mankind, all laws, human and divine, and all punishments, contradict this opinion ; for they all proceed upon the principle, that some crimes are of greater magnitude than others. We know too, that the Deity distinguishes in the most exact manner between different offences ; that he apportions to each an equitable degree of punishment, and that he who has sinned greatly shall be beaten with many, and he who has offended less, with fewer stripes.

Indeed, it is when we consider the minute shades by which different sins and even different characters are discriminated, that we perceive in the most forcible manner the impossibility both of the doctrine of endless misery, and of limited punishment terminated by destruction. How slight is the difference between the worst good man and the best wicked man ! How impossible is it for the utmost exertion of human sagacity to distinguish between them, yet for this imperceptible difference in character there is, according to these doctrines, an infinite difference in destiny ! He who is lowest in the scale of goodness, and who differs from the best wicked man only by the slightest shade, is admitted to infinite happiness : he in whom wickedness preponderates upon the whole, but in so small a measure that no human penetration can discern it, is shut

out from the enjoyment of heaven ; doomed by one doctrine to inconceivable torments through endless ages, and by the other to dreadful suffering for a very protracted period, and then to endless extinction of being. According to one opinion the positive *torment*, according to the other the positive *loss*, is infinite, yet the difference in desert is indistinguishable. This is a disproportion to which there is no parallel in any of the works of the Deity, and which cannot exist, it is reasonable to believe, in any of his dispensations.

SECTION II.

OF THE ARGUMENT IN FAVOUR OF ENDLESS MISERY, FOUNDED ON THE DIVINE JUSTICE.

As the Author of the beautiful system of the universe must possess almighty power and infinite wisdom, so he must be endowed with every moral excellence. He who gave to all things the relations they possess, must be perfectly acquainted with them; and since he cannot possibly err, nor have any motive to commit injustice, he must always act with undeviating rectitude.

Justice is one of those virtues which are essential to the perfection of the moral character. The intercourses of society could not subsist without it, and it is peculiarly necessary in a governor and judge. It is, therefore, with the greatest propriety attributed to the wise and benevolent ruler of the world.

Yet while it is universally admitted that the Deity possesses this excellence in the highest perfection, many persons entertain very erroneous ideas respecting it. It is usual to speak of it as a stupendous and awful attribute, inexplicable in its nature, terrible in its consequences,

and possessing little in common with the virtue of justice among mankind. It is represented as contrary in its nature to goodness, and all the use which is made of it in favour of the doctrine of endless misery, must proceed upon this presumption: for if it be of the same nature as benevolence, it can no more oppose the final restoration of all mankind than goodness itself.

To shew the fallacy of the distinction which many persons endeavour to establish between the justice and goodness of God, it is sufficient to observe, that the Deity cannot possess two attributes of an opposite nature from each other; that all his perfections harmonize, that they have all one origin and one object, that that origin is benevolence, and that object the diffusion of happiness; but as there is no attribute concerning which such vague and mistaken notions are entertained, and as these opinions necessarily affect the view which is taken of the most interesting doctrines, it is of great importance to establish precise and just conceptions respecting it.

The misapprehension which has prevailed relative to this subject, has arisen chiefly from the opinion, that justice in God is of a different nature from this excellence in man. But as we have no idea of the divine goodness, except from those indications of it which are similar to the appearances that prove the benignity of

human beings, so we can have no conception of the divine justice, if it do not resemble that quality, which in the intercourse of men with each other, is distinguished by this term.

Man does not stand alone in the creation. He bears certain relations to his fellow-beings. From these arise certain duties, the exact performance of which constitutes the virtue termed justice. To the several relations of father, brother, husband, citizen, magistrate, judge, pertain appropriate duties, and when a person uniformly and faithfully discharges them, we say that he is just.

And though it is true that the term justice is sometimes used in a more restricted sense, to express one particular duty, yet it is often employed even in a still more extensive acceptation than that which is here assigned. It frequently comprehends not only the duties which we owe to our fellow-creatures, but those also which relate to ourselves and to God. In this sense it is often used in scripture, as in the following passages.

Proverbs iii. 33: "He blesseth the habitation of the just." iv. 18: "The path of the just is as the shining light." x. 7: "The memory of the just is blessed." xvii. 26: "To punish the just is not good." Heb. ii. 4: "The just shall live by faith." Luke ii. 25: "Simeon was just

and devout." xiv. 14: "Thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." In all these places it is obvious, that the term just is used to express general excellence of character.

In common language, however, it is more frequently employed to denote the faithful discharge of social duties; more commonly still to signify the treatment of men according to their character and desert, without regard to their persons or station; in which sense it stands opposed to partiality, and perhaps most commonly of all to express the equitable punishment of the guilty.

As men are connected with their fellow-beings, so the Deity bears a certain relation to men. He is their creator, their parent, their moral governor and their judge. When we say that *He* is just, we can mean no more than that he is guided in his conduct towards his creatures, by a principle similar in its nature to the virtue of justice among mankind; that as their creator, for example, he makes a provision for their comfortable existence; as a parent, he satisfies their returning wants, and teaches them the lessons of wisdom and virtue; as their moral governor, he rules them according to the principles of perfect equity and benevolence; and as their judge, he treats them with the utmost

exactness according to wise and salutary laws, without partiality.

Perhaps, however, it will lead to a more precise and accurate conception of the only real difference in this principle, as a divine and a human excellence, to say, that justice in man is the rendering to every person that which is his due ; and that justice in God, is the treatment of every person in the manner which is best suited to his moral state.

When it is affirmed that this principle, as a human excellence, consists in rendering to every person that which is his due, this definition is meant to include, not only what the laws of the state and the institutions of society require, but also what humanity, conscience and religion enjoin. The just man is he who, not limiting himself to the demands of any prescribed law, does good to the utmost extent of his judgment and ability.

But because he has neither the wisdom invariably to discern what is best adapted to the moral condition of his fellow-beings, nor the power always to modify his conduct according to it, even though he should clearly perceive it, it is not proper to make this the rule of his actions. Such a rule is applicable only to Him who possesses the attribute of om-

niscience, and who has in his own hand the issues of events.

It is evident that the distinction which is here made between this principle as it exists in the Deity and in man, arises not from any difference in the nature of the virtue in the one being and in the other, but solely in the degree in which they possess it; the one enjoying it in absolute perfection, the other only in a limited measure.

This account of divine justice, explains in a satisfactory manner the principle on which the Deity rewards and punishes mankind. Did men never violate the laws of rectitude, he would make them invariably and completely happy. But there is no person who is free from fault: the moral state of every individual is in some respect, or at some period, such as it ought not to be. Now every bad disposition, and every improper habit, must be rectified before happiness can be enjoyed. It is necessary, therefore, that the moral Governor of the world should vary his conduct according to the character of the persons whom he has to treat; that he should visit the good with favour, and manifest his disapprobation of the wicked; for if he were to make happiness compatible with sin, it could not be corrected.

The effect of pain is to make us dislike and avoid that which causes it. It is for this reason

that pain is annexed to sin. Sin is an evil which it is necessary to remove ; pain is employed as the instrument of its destruction : and that principle by which the Deity has established this constitution of things, by which he so regulates events as invariably to secure the ultimate reward of goodness, and the punishment of wickedness, is distinguished by the term justice.

Goodness and justice, then, are not opposite and opposing attributes. They have the same nature, the same origin, the same end ; they assume a different aspect according to the character of the individual towards whom they are exercised : but they equally arise from benevolence, and are equally exerted to promote happiness. Justice is so far from being incompatible with goodness, that it is an essential part of it : it is the highest goodness directed by the most perfect wisdom.

Were it necessary to add any thing more to shew, that the divine justice is not inconsistent with the attribute of goodness, but a part of it, the consideration of the design of its inflictions would afford farther evidence of this truth. Every violation of the law of God, involves the transgressor, sooner or later, in suffering : and of this constitution of things, by which pain is inseparably connected with deviation from rectitude, the Supreme Being is the author.

Why did he appoint it? Why did he so dispose the whole tendency of his moral government, as to ensure this consequence? Why does he, who is a being of unerring wisdom and infinite benevolence, never suffer any offence which is unrepented of to escape punishment? Since his very nature is love, and since he created all his intelligent offspring in order to make them happy, it can be no gratification to him to involve them in suffering. Their groans can be no music to his ear. If he afflict them, it must be not for his own gratification, but for their benefit.

Neither is it the part of justice to indulge passion, nor to gratify revenge, nor in any mysterious way to satisfy the claims of law, but to check the progress of vice and misery, by correcting the evil dispositions from which they proceed. By inflicting punishment on the sinner, it accomplishes this in two ways. First, by the effect of example operating as a warning on those who may be disposed to commit similar offences; and secondly, by making the transgressor himself feel the evil consequences of his conduct, and thereby inducing him to avoid it in future. Every person allows, that the first is one object of the inflictions of justice, but surely the second is at least equally important; since it applies to the root of the evil at once;

and aims to correct actual, while the other can only prevent possible evil. If the punishment which justice imposes can prevent the future commission of crimes, and correct the disposition from which the past proceeded, it is both more perfect and more benevolent than if it effect the one without the other. That it is in itself possible to accomplish both cannot be denied; and since God is able to do all that is possible, and disposed to do all that is best, it must be his object to effect both.

In the 18th chapter of Ezekiel, there is a beautiful passage which illustrates in a striking manner this view of the divine justice. The house of Israel had complained that the conduct of God was not just. He condescends to reason with them on the subject, and to prove that his dispensations are perfectly equitable. “If,” says he, “the wicked turn from all the sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die: his transgressions that he hath committed shall not be mentioned to him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live. Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die, saith the Lord God, and not that he should return from his ways and live? But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth

according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All the righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he has trespassed, and in his sins that he has sinned, he shall die. Yet ye say that the way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel, is not my way equal, and are not your ways unequal? When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them, for his iniquity that he hath done he shall die. Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. Because he considereth and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live: he shall not die."

This is as though he had said—When the wicked man turns from his sins, I cease to punish him. I do not remember against him his former transgressions. His moral state is changed; my conduct towards him is therefore no longer the same. While he was wedded to transgression it was necessary that he should be punished. Now that he is repentant and obedient, it has ceased to be so, and I may visit him with the smiles of favour. I have no pleasure in his misery or death: neither can benefit

or gratify me : all my dispensations are designed and have a tendency to make him in love with life, with goodness and with happiness.

If, on the other hand, the righteous man forsake the path of rectitude, and do according to the abominations of the wicked, I suffer him no longer to be at peace. I permit not his former righteousness to secure him from punishment. It is necessary that experience should teach him the error of his choice. It is the only way to rectify his will and reclaim his heart. Is not this conduct consistent with justice ? Does not justice render it indispensable ? To both I act as their moral state requires ; and thus I will always act. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. Do you demand the reason of my conduct ? It is because I have no pleasure in the misery of the wicked, and because it is the object of my dispensations to make the wicked righteous, and the righteous happy.

Such is the principle according to which the moral Governor of the world himself declares that he invariably regulates his conduct. Nothing surely can afford a more solid ground of confidence and trust. In the state in which his wisdom has seen fit to place us, there is much which, to our short-sighted view, may seem inconsistent with perfect rectitude. When

we see the triumph of the vicious and the fall of the virtuous ; when we behold the prevalence of natural and moral evil, and contemplate the wickedness and misery which desolate the earth, who is there that is not sometimes ready to raise a murmur against the Sovereign Ruler of events, or who does not lift, trembling, his eye to his throne, half doubting whether there be indeed an all-perfect Ruler there ? When the storm of adversity falls with violence on our head ; when our hearts ache with suffering, or when we weep for the woes of those who are dear to us as ourselves ; when our brightest hopes are shrouded in disappointment ; when our comforts are snatched from us, and the Merciless Spoiler bears to the tomb our best-loved friends ; the soul desponding asks, if that can be wisdom which occasions such terrible emotion, or that goodness which gives but to take away ?—It is a suspicion which agony extorts from human infirmity. But in the Christian's breast it is only the suspicion of a moment. No where can he direct his attention without perceiving traces of the goodness of God, nor even in the hour of deepest sorrow can he look inward on himself, without discovering numberless proofs of mercy. His faith revives. The iron grasp of despair loosens its hold of his heart. Again

he is himself, and while his principles resume their wonted influence in his soul, the language of reviving hope and trust falls from his lips—
 “ ‘ Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right ? ’
 Can he, whose benevolence called me into being, made me what I am, and gave me what I possess, forget to be gracious, or treat me with injustice ? It is impossible ! ‘ Justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne ! ’ ”

But it is not to the sorrows of life alone, that this view of the divine justice applies its sustaining energy. It supports our hopes in the prospect of that awful day, which it is so difficult to contemplate with composure. There are moments, when the most pious and holy tremble at the thought of appearing before the tribunal of the Judge of the whole earth ; but the conviction that his decisions must tend to promote the ultimate welfare of all intelligent beings, subdues every gloomy and mistrustful fear.

It is not merely for his own felicity that the good man is concerned. He looks beyond himself. The destiny of others affects his own. If the great majority of his fellow-creatures are to be banished to irremediable and endless woe, he feels that he cannot be happy. “ Merciful Father, (his own felicity excites the exclamation, and he cannot repress it ; Merciful Father, he

cries,) can any attribute of thy nature require this! Canst thou have formed the great majority of thy creatures on purpose to torment them! Oh no: every perfection of thy nature whose operation is felt by man, must be exerted for his good!"

Viewing, then, the attribute of justice, which has been supposed to require the endless misery of the greater part of the human race, as that very principle whose operation is designed to prevent this terrible consequence, he feels himself capable of relying with implicit confidence on the decisions of the Judge, both with regard to himself and to all mankind. He is satisfied that he will treat even the most criminal with perfect equity; that he will place them in circumstances the best adapted to their unhappy condition; that his discipline will ultimately accomplish its end, and extirpate sin and misery from the creation.

By this attribute, then, must be determined the future destiny of all reasonable beings! How deeply ought this solemn truth to be engraven on every mind! How weak, how foolish is the indulgence of any criminal propensity! The scrutiny of omniscience is on us. The power of omnipotence surrounds us. The decisions of unerring justice await us.

Who then can sin with the hope of impunity?
Let the wicked man hear and tremble; for
remorse and woe await him: and let him that
conceiveth iniquity in his heart, consider with
himself, that justice and judgment are the habi-
tation of the throne of the Great Being with
whom he has to do.

SECTION III.

OF THE ARGUMENT IN FAVOUR OF ENDLESS MISERY, FOUNDED ON THE DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY.

IF the justice of God afford no argument in favour of the doctrine of endless misery, still less is it supported by the divine sovereignty. If by the sovereignty of God be meant his exemption from control, this may be a reason for his doing what is right, but cannot be a reason for his doing what is wrong. If he have benevolence to design the ultimate happiness of all, wisdom to discern the means of securing his purpose, and if he be absolutely sovereign, that is, if there be no superior power to control his will, this is so far from affording an argument against the final prevalence of purity and enjoyment, that it forms a solid foundation on which the hope of it may be established.

If from the sovereignty of God it be inferred, that he can do whatever he pleases, this conclusion is certainly just; but at the same time it must be remembered, that there are some things which he cannot will. To suppose, for example, that he could create millions of beings with a

determination to doom them to intolerable and endless agony, contradicts every idea of his character which natural and revealed religion teach, and cannot possibly be proved by the admission that he possesses unlimited power; for though he is sovereign, and can do what he wills, he is also good, and cannot will what is malevolent.

It has been objected to the doctrine of Universal Restoration, that it places the future happiness of mankind on the footing of right and claim. Nothing can be less true. The advocates of this opinion are so far from believing that endless happiness can be demanded as a right, that they contend that no creature has a claim to existence itself, much less to this or to that degree of enjoyment. They maintain that life is so entirely a free gift, that every intelligent being, however low his rank in the scale of creation, or however little his happiness exceeds his misery, ought, if his pleasure does preponderate, to receive the boon with gratitude: but they contend, that if the balance of enjoyment be against him, he has nothing for which to be thankful, and that a benevolent being who causes him to live for ever, must make his immortality a blessing.

Such, then, are the arguments which are commonly urged in support of the doctrine of

Endless Misery, whether derived from the language of Scripture, or from considerations which are independent of it. If to affirm, that no sober mind can consider them with candour without being satisfied of their insufficiency and fallacy, be rather the language of strong individual conviction, than of prudence or of truth ; it may at least be said, that the preceding observations deserve the serious attention of every person, who wishes to contemplate the Deity with reverence and love, or to vindicate the claims of the Christian system to the respect and reception of reflective men.

The cheering and benevolent tendency of a belief in the ultimate happiness of all intelligent beings ought, at least, to entitle it to attention. He who believes that the whole system of things is under the wisest and the best direction, has a source of consolation which must be entirely unknown to him, whose system leads him to suspect that the wisdom and benevolence of its author are limited and partial. Embracing the faith of the first, when true to my principles, I can contemplate the present with complacency, and anticipate the future with delight. I can look upon adversity with resignation, upon prosperity with a calm and chastened joy. I can smile even in those moments when neither philosophy nor religion can check the starting

tear. I see, it is true, that man is born to trouble, that his days are few and evil, that impurity stains him, that passion blinds him, that evil of every kind assails him, and that a future state will increase the misery of many individuals for a very protracted period; but I see too a principle at work which must finally destroy it. I see the hand of the Deity arranging every event with exquisite skill and unbounded benignity. I see the prospect brighten as the wheels of time revolve, developing gradually the stupendous scheme, and manifesting at every movement new indications of wisdom and new demonstrations of love. I see at the helm of affairs an intelligence which cannot err, a watchfulness which cannot tire, a benignity which cannot be unkind, and a power which cannot be frustrated. I see at the head of his large family a Father, whose equal love is extended to every individual, who is labouring to promote the happiness of each alike, according to the measure of capacity he has given, and who will not labour in vain. Though clouds and darkness are round about him, I am satisfied that righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne. I therefore bow with resignation, where I cannot exult with joy, and glow with hope, even when nearest to despair.

But to those who believe that our heavenly

Father is partial and capricious in his kindness ; that he is the cruel and inexorable tyrant of the great majority of his creatures ; that by an irreversible decree he doomed them millions of ages before their existence to unutterable torments, and that a few only escape this horrid fate, with affectionate and solemn earnestness I would say, How can you be happy? How can you be happy even for yourself? How great are the chances that you are not in the number of the elect ! How many thousands are passed by ! How few are chosen ! How much more probable is it that you are among the thousands than among the few ! Why do you believe that you are the favourite of heaven ? What mark is engraven on your forehead ; what sensations are peculiar to your heart ; what is there in your dispositions or your conduct by which you have ascertained the important fact ? You think you are one of the elect. It may be so. But it may *not* be so. When the chances are so much against you, you cannot be certain of any thing. It is then uncertain whether you are destined to the enjoyment of unutterable and everlasting pleasure, or to the endurance of endless and inconceivable torments. You flatter yourself that the happy portion will be yours. But men easily flatter themselves. What if you should be buoying yourself up with a delusive expect-

tation ! When such happiness is at stake, when such misery impends, and when both are shrouded in such awful uncertainty, how can you enjoy a moment's peace ?

But supposing that you are perfectly satisfied with regard to your own condition, are your anxieties confined to your own welfare, and do you care only for yourself ? Are you a father ; are you a mother ? Do you love your children, and do you really think of the doctrines you profess to believe ? If so, how can you possibly be happy ? In imagination I often accompany you into the bosom of your family. I see your eye rest with anxious fondness on your smiling babes. I see the tear start to it. I do not wonder at it. I should be less surprised did your tears unceasingly flow, and were your very hearts to break. That child of whom you are so fond, whose innocence affects and whose prattle delights you, what will be its eternal destiny ? What uncertainty is there ! What horror *may be* there ! If when you are in Abraham's bosom, you should look beyond the gulph which divides you, and behold it lifting up its eyes in torments, and imploring you in vain for a cup of cold water to quench its parched tongue ; if you should know that this state of dreadful misery will be without end, and that its sufferings will answer no purpose, would heaven afford you the

least enjoyment? Could you contemplate with complacency the author of its misery? Could you surround his throne with songs of praise, exclaiming in grateful triumph, “Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth”?*

* Yes, there are persons in whom system has so completely subdued the feelings of humanity, that they have brought themselves to view this horrid picture with a steady gaze, to contemplate it with complacency, nay, even to affirm that it is beautiful and glorious. “The lamb of God shall roar as a lion against them: he shall excommunicate and cast them out of his presence for ever, by a sentence from the throne, saying, ‘Depart from me ye cursed.’ He shall adjudge them to everlasting fire, and the society of devils for evermore. And this sentence, we suppose, shall be pronounced with an audible voice, by the man Christ. And all the saints shall say, ‘*Hallelujah, true and righteous are his judgments.*’ None were so compassionate as the saints when on earth, during the time of God’s patience. But now that time is at an end, their compassion on the ungodly is swallowed up in joy, in the Mediator’s glory, and his executing of just judgment, by which his enemies are made his footstool. Though sometimes the righteous man did weep in secret places for their pride, and because they would not hear: yet then he ‘*shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance, he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.*’—Psalm lviii. 10. No pity shall then be shewn to them from their nearest relations. The godly wife shall applaud the justice of the Judge, in the condemnation of her ungodly husband: the godly husband shall say, Amen, to the damnation of her who lay in his bosom: the godly parents shall say, Hallelujah, at the passing of the sentence against their ungodly child: and the godly child shall from his heart, approve the damnation of his wicked parents,

It is impossible. Can doctrines which, if they are seriously thought of, must poison the sweetest sources of human felicity, convert heaven itself into a place of torment, and force every feeling mind to contemplate the Deity with horror, be founded in truth, or form part of the revelation of the God of truth? It cannot be. Every serious and pious mind must rejoice to find that those expressions which occasionally occur in scripture, and which may at first sight seem to favour these frightful opinions, admit of a rational and consistent interpretation, without supposing their truth; while it abounds with many expressions which can have no meaning, and entire series of reasoning which can have no object, unless they are false.

the father who begat him and the mother who bore him.”
Boston's Four-fold State, State IV. Head iv. sec. 9.

After this, can we wonder that system should have so perverted the understanding, as to lead it to approve of the infliction of pain, imprisonment and death, for an adherence to what was conscientiously believed to be the truth, and so corrupted the heart, as to make it triumph in the subdual of its best feelings, which rose against the dreadful injustice and cruelty, as the noblest effort of heroic piety? After this, will any one venture to maintain, that mere speculative opinions, as many persons term them, are of little importance?

CHAPTER III.

OF THE DOCTRINE OF LIMITED PUNISHMENT TERMINATED BY DESTRUCTION.

MANY Christians of the highest reputation for wisdom and piety, in all ages of the church, have maintained that the wicked will neither be punished with Endless Misery, nor permitted to be happy at any period of their future being; but that they will be raised from the dead, afflicted with severe and lasting suffering, and then undergo death a second time, from which they will never be restored to conscious existence. This hypothesis, as it supposes the infliction of a degree of pain, which is exactly proportioned in every case to the degree of guilt, and which is followed by the total and endless extinction of intelligence and life, is called the Doctrine of Limited Punishment, terminated by Destruction.

Many passages of scripture are conceived not only strongly to favour, but expressly to assert this opinion. It is true, that it is countenanced by the *sound* of several expressions which occur

in the New Testament ; but a careful examination of these terms will, perhaps, shew that their genuine meaning is widely different from that which a less thorough investigation might seem to indicate, and that there is no foundation in scripture for this hypothesis.

1. The advocates of this opinion, like the defenders of the doctrine of Endless Misery, endeavour to establish it on the term *αιωνιος*, which they contend signifies endless duration, and some go so far as to maintain that it is invariably used in this sense, and that it never denotes a limited period : * but in opposition to those who plead for unending torment, they argue that punishment, not misery, is the substantive to which the adjective is applied ; that there may be everlasting punishment without everlasting misery, and that the former, not the latter, is invariably threatened in the sacred writings. They maintain, however, that the word which is translated everlasting, does signify duration without end.

It is not necessary to repeat here the observations which have been made upon this term. The evidence which has been adduced of its frequent acceptation in a limited sense, appears

* See the *Universal Restoration of Mankind Examined, &c.* By Mr. John Marsom. Vol. i. pp. 134, 135.

to be irresistible ; and though it must be admitted that it does sometimes denote endless duration, yet it has been clearly shewn that this is the case only when the nature of the subject to which it is applied necessarily implies unending existence, and that then it derives the meaning of endless from the subject.

The word being in itself equivocal, and capable both of a limited and of an unlimited signification, the only question which can be agitated, is, whether, when applied to future punishment, it does or does not, denote duration without end. If the affirmative be maintained, it must be shewn that there is something in this subject which necessarily imparts to it the sense of endless ; every argument founded upon it, unless this be premised, must be futile, and the advocate for the doctrine of destruction, in venturing to employ it, without first establishing this point, rests his hypothesis upon a term which makes as much against it, as for it. But, if instead of being able to perform this task, his opponent can shew that the reverse is true, and prove (as has been proved, pp. 178, 179,) that the nature of punishment will not admit of this acceptation of the term, the controversy, as far as this word is concerned, must be considered as decided in the opinion of every one who

understands the principles of fair and legitimate reasoning.

2. The advocates of the doctrine of destruction, contend, that those passages which affirm that the wicked shall *perish* or be *destroyed*, and that they shall suffer *death* or *destruction*, decidedly prove that they will be punished with the utter extinction of being. This argument is founded on the presumption, that these expressions denote the endless loss of conscious existence. Few persons, perhaps, will rise from an investigation of this point without a conviction that there is no foundation whatever for this assumption.

Απολλομι, the word commonly rendered to perish or destroy, occurs about ninety times in the New Testament. It is used in several different senses: as, to lose, to lose life or any thing; to kill or destroy temporally, and this is its most frequent signification; but it often means also, *to render miserable*, and is used to denote *the infliction of pain or punishment*. Schleusner renders it *miserum reddo, pœnis afficio, molestiam ac indignationem creo alicui*. Rom. ii. 12. xiv. 15. 1 Cor. xv. 18.

Απωλεια, generally translated death or destruction, occurs about twenty times in the New Testament. It sometimes signifies death or

temporal destruction, at others injury, hurt or calamity of any kind. Schleusner renders it unhappiness, any calamity or misery, and observes that it is especially used to denote *the divine punishment of offences, both in this and in a future life*. His words are, *infelicitas, omnis calamitas, miseria, et speciatim de pœnis divinis peccatorum et in hac et in futura vita usurpatur*. Matt. vii. 13. Rom. ix. 22. Philip. i. 28.

3. The word *ὀλεθρος*, commonly rendered destruction, signifies also, *pain, misery, punishment*. Schleusner renders it *pœna, dolor, vexatio, cruciatus*. 1 Cor. v. 5: “Deliver such a one to Satan for the *destruction* of the flesh;” *εἰς ὀλεθρον της σαρκος*, ut corpus crucietur et doloribus afficiatur. “Some bodily pain was inflicted, in order to produce repentance and reformation.” *Simpson*. The application of *αἰωνιος* to this word, in 2 Thess. i. 9, (who shall be punished with everlasting destruction,) cannot prove, that this expression denotes the endless extinction of consciousness and life, because it has been shewn that *ὀλεθρος*, when affixed to the punishment of the guilty, means pain and suffering; and that *αἰωνιος*, signifies not proper eternity, but lasting duration.

4. On the word *θανατος*, death, and the phrase *δευτερος θανατος*, the second death, the advocates of the doctrine of destruction lay the greatest

stress. They contend, that the strict and invariable meaning of death, is the total extinction of consciousness and life, that the doctrine of the resurrection affords us the only satisfactory evidence we enjoy that this extinction of being will not be endless, and that since the wicked are threatened with a second death from which there is no promise of deliverance, we must conclude, that their punishment will consist in absolute and irrecoverable destruction.

A little attention to the subject, will probably shew, that the fundamental principle upon which this argument is founded, is fallacious. *Θανατος* does not denote the endless extinction of conscious existence. It occurs in the New Testament in several different senses, but never *once* in this, when used concerning intelligent beings. When it relates to the guilty, it denotes, like the other terms which have been considered, *pain, punishment, suffering*. Schleusner observes, that it signifies, 1. Properly natural death, or the separation of the soul from the body, not occasioned by external violence. 2. Violent death, or the punishment of death. 3. Per metonymiam, quodvis gravius malum et periculum mortis. 4. Pestis, morbus pestiferus. 5. *Any kind of misery and unhappiness, but chiefly the punishment of wickedness, and of offences in this, as well as in a future life: omnis miseria et*

infelicitas, maxime quæ est vitiositatis et peccatorum pæna in hac paritur ac in futura vita. 1 John iii. 14. Rom. vii. 24. John v. 24. Rom. i. 32.

It must be evident, then, that these words, when applied to future punishment, do not denote literal and absolute destruction, or the extinction of conscious existence, but the pain and suffering which will be inflicted upon the guilty, in consequence of their offences. By attaching this meaning to these terms, we render every passage in which they occur, consistent with the general tenor of the language of the New Testament, with the benevolent spirit of the gospel, and with the perfections of the Divine Being: but the argument attempted to be deduced from them in favour of the doctrine of destruction, is founded merely on their sound, without regarding their real and scriptural meaning.

But even were the fundamental principle upon which it is attempted to establish this hypothesis, namely, that death signifies the eternal extinction of consciousness and life, admitted (though it has been proved to be false) instead of supporting the doctrine of limited punishment, terminated by destruction, it would be fatal to it: for if death denote, together with the disorganization of the corporeal frame, the utter

extinction of the intellectual faculty, the wicked cannot be punished in a future state with great and protracted suffering, as this hypothesis teaches, because the moment which terminates their mortal existence, must, according to this meaning of the term, put an eternal period to their being.

Should it be urged, that the Scriptures affirm that the wicked shall awake from the sleep of death, and suffer the punishment due to their sins, it is obvious that this very argument proves in the most decisive manner, that the meaning attempted to be affixed to the terms we are considering, is not just, and establishes the important conclusion, that death is not the *endless* deprivation of life, nor destruction the *everlasting* extinction of the intellectual principle.

If it be contended, that we are assured that the wicked will undergo death again after their resurrection, and that we have no authority for supposing that they will be restored a second time to life, then the ground of the argument is changed: it is made to depend entirely upon those expressions, which either affirm or imply that the wicked will be punished with the second death: the controversy is thus brought into a very narrow compass.

With respect to the phrase *δεύτερος θάνατος*, the second death, it is obvious that were death

really the *endless* extinction of organized and intelligent existence, the expression *second* death would be absurd ; for there could be no second death, were the first absolute and eternal.

If it be just to give a literal interpretation to this phrase, it seems to warrant the conclusion, that the wicked will die a second time ; yet it is not *affirmed* that they will never rise again. Of a first resurrection we are certain, and we have no assurance that there will not be a second. There is no passage of scripture hostile to the conclusion that there will. Should it be inferred, that a second resurrection will *not* take place, because there is no express promise to authorize the expectation, it may with equal justice be concluded, that there *will*, because it is not positively affirmed that there will not. Of these opposite inferences, the latter is at least as well founded as the former : nay, it is much more so ; because the first is incompatible with some passages of scripture, but the second is contradicted by none, and is directly supported by several, particularly by those which speak of a first resurrection ; for a first resurrection implies a second.

It is affirmed, 1 Cor. xv. 26, that the last enemy which shall be destroyed is death ; that death is swallowed up in victory ; that Jesus

Christ has abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the gospel. 2 Tim. i. 10. But if the second death be absolutely endless, or reduce the subjects of it to a state of total and eternal unconsciousness, death is not abolished; its duration is commensurate with eternity; it is not vanquished, it is the victor; it is not destroyed, it triumphs.

To the doctrine of Destruction, as well as to that of Endless Misery, the great truth that there will be a resurrection both of the just and of the unjust, is decidedly hostile. Who can believe that the benevolent Father of the human race will call the greater part of his creatures from the sleep of death, and re-organize the curious and beautiful structure in which intelligence and consciousness reside, on purpose to inflict upon them everlasting misery, or very protracted suffering, which will terminate in destruction? What a work does this doctrine assign to the beneficent Creator! How inconsistent with every perfection of his nature! How different this his second from his first creation!

From every thing which we see and feel, it is evident that he intended to communicate happiness by bestowing the gift of life. Is it then possible to imagine, that he will raise his creatures from the dead, with no other view

than to counteract his own design ; that he will exert his omnipotence on purpose to frustrate the counsels of his benevolence ?

This hypothesis involves the absurdity which has been often pointed out in the preceding pages ; it supposes that the Deity restores millions of creatures to life for no other purpose than that of rendering them miserable, which is an act of cruelty of which we can form no adequate conception.

A resurrection to a state of pure, unmixed suffering, (which is the common notion of a state of punishment,) which lasts for a very protracted period, and terminates in destruction, must render the existence of these unhappy persons, upon the whole, a curse. If the Creator saw that any combination of circumstances would be attended with this consequence, he would either have prevented the occurrence of such a train of events, or have withheld the fiat which was about to call the sufferers into life. It has been proved that every benevolent being would certainly do the one or the other. Either, therefore, there must be, even in the state of punishment, a greater prevalence of happiness than misery, which is contrary to the general idea of that state ; or if this be not the case, since it must render the existence of millions of creatures infinitely worse upon the whole than

non-existence, it is irreconcilable with the divine benignity.

If, however, any advocate of the doctrine of destruction, should affirm that he does not adopt this opinion of the state of punishment, but believes that, at the winding up of the great drama of life, every intelligent being will have reason to bless his Creator for his existence, it is cheerfully admitted that this argument does not apply against his hypothesis; but surely while his heart glows with pleasure at the generous conclusion he adopts, he cannot but wish that his satisfaction could be perfected by the sight of pure, happy, and ever-improving intelligences, in the room of that awful and eternal blank which must press upon his view, and close the scene! *

* It affords me great satisfaction to perceive that this argument in favour of the doctrine of Universal Restoration, founded on the resurrection of the wicked, which I think extremely important, and even decisive of the controversy, impressed with equal force the mind of my much-respected friend, the late Dr. Estlin, of Bristol. I cannot reflect without pleasure on the conversations I enjoyed with him on this subject at an early period of my life, and to which I owe, probably, much of that interest and zeal with which I have since pursued the inquiry. Intelligent, amiable, benevolent, admiring and loving the worthy and the wise, pitying with Charity's own tenderness the vicious, cheerful and diffusing cheerfulness, he lived—he died—THE CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHER. Part of the passage

Such are the arguments in favour of the doctrine of Limited Punishment terminated by

in his Discourses on Universal Restitution, which has led me to the mention of his name, (and who that knew him can refer to his name without paying it a tribute of respect?) I must allow myself the pleasure of quoting.

“ It is proper to mention *two* doctrines, which, if they had been sufficiently adverted to, one would suppose the idea (of the final destruction of the wicked) could never have entered the human mind.” “ The first is that the wicked, without doubt, constitute *by far the greater part* of the human race. This truth, which, although it is reconcileable to *infinite* benevolence, yet to a heart which is susceptible of the finest *human* affections, is, after all, a most painful consideration, *cannot* be evaded. The voice of Infallibility hath spoken it; the elevated standard of Christian morality, compared with the general moral state of mankind, confirms it; every analogy of nature points out to it. ‘ Enter ye in at the *strait* gate; for *wide* is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat; because *strait* is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and *few* there be that find it.’

“ The next doctrine, which must not be forgotten, (I confess I found myself inclined to give it up, when I saw clearly that the doctrine of Annihilation could not be maintained in consistency with it,) *is the resurrection of the wicked*. If the Scriptures had *positively asserted* that the wicked would *not* rise, and that their *death* would be the final extinction of their being, the mind must have *acquiesced* in what, reasoning from the infinite benevolence of God, the best foundation of reasoning, it would still have acknowledged a difficulty: if the Scriptures had said nothing on the subject, their resurrection and restoration to virtue and happiness might, I think, have been inferred

Destruction, and such are the difficulties with which the hypothesis is encumbered. Every

from the same sure and certain principles. They do not, however, leave any room for doubt on the subject. It is *expressly* said, ‘All that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God and come forth; they that have done good to the resurrection of life, they that have done evil to the resurrection of condemnation.’ Every account which is given in scripture of the day of judgment confirms this.

“The doctrine of Annihilation, then, supposes that by far the greater part of mankind were created by a benevolent and holy Being, whose prescience foresaw how they would act, to be vicious and die, to be raised from the dead, re-organized or re-created, to be *miserable*, and then to undergo a public execution, by which they would be for ever blotted out of his creation. Some of the wisest and best men that the world ever produced, have adopted this scheme of the origin, progress and end of the divine dispensations. I know we are apt to *overlook* the fate of this *immense multitude*; and a most baneful effect upon the human mind, upon all the institutions of society, and particularly upon penal jurisprudence, has this overlooking of what *others*, even the majority, suffer. My brethren, if the fact be so, fix your minds upon it. You have often regarded with admiration that curious effect of the divine power, the human body; the delicate structure of the eye and the ear, the nerves and brain, the veins and arteries, and the various organs of sensation, respiration and motion; you have contemplated with devout wonder the faculties of the human mind; you have acknowledged with grateful satisfaction that God is Love; that every organ, that every power both of body and mind, is an inlet to enjoyment; and that man was formed in the image of God, that he might be the object of his favour for ever. Contemplate the scene which is now to take place.

objection which is commonly urged by intelligent persons, against the opinion that it is the great design of the divine government to bring all mankind to a state of perfect purity and happiness, whether derived from the doctrine of Endless Misery, or from that of total and eternal Destruction, has now been fully considered. With regard to the doctrine of Endless Misery, it has been shewn, that the terms everlasting, eternal, for ever, for ever and ever, &c., on which it is chiefly founded, do not denote duration without end, but only a lasting period: that even if it could be proved, that these expressions, when applied to the subject of future punishment, must necessarily be taken in the sense of endless, it would by no means warrant the conclusion, that the wicked will be kept alive in misery through the ages of eternity, because it is everlasting punishment, not everlasting torment, with which the wicked are

What a process is going on through nature! Myriads of those beings are to be raised from the dead, that is, re-organized, re-formed, or re-created, (a work to which Omnipotence alone is equal, for the laws of nature are nothing but the mode of operation of the God of nature,) to be miserable in a greater or less degree, according to their degrees of guilt, and at length to be finally destroyed by fire! The mind cannot dwell on this idea!"—Discourses on Universal Restitution, delivered to the Society of Protestant Dissenters in Lewin's Mead, Bristol. By John Prior Estlin, LL. D. pp. 82—87.

threatened ; that the application of the same term to the duration of the punishment of the wicked, and the happiness of the righteous, by no means proves that both are of equal continuance ; because this word denotes different degrees of duration, when applied to different subjects ; because the nature of these two subjects is not only not the same, but directly opposite ; and because many considerations prove, that one of these states will be truly everlasting, but that the other cannot be so : that the argument derived from the metaphor of fire, and particularly from the expression unquenchable fire, is totally fallacious, because this language is used respecting fires which have been extinguished for ages, and respecting places which have since flourished, and which are still in existence : that the sin against the Holy Ghost, which has been deemed so decisive a proof of this doctrine, directly confutes it, since it affords the most satisfactory evidence, that expressions of this kind do not, and cannot denote duration without end, and since the punishment annexed to this crime may be inflicted to the very letter without its being endless : that those minor arguments which are deduced from some expressions and parables of scripture, are insufficient to establish the doctrine, while some of them afford powerful

arguments against it, and that the same is true of the reasonings by which many persons have endeavoured to support it.

With regard to the doctrine of Limited Punishment terminated by Destruction, it has been shewn, that it is founded solely on terms to which an unscriptural meaning is affixed; that while it professes to be established on the plain and positive declarations of scripture, it is countenanced chiefly by a phrase which occurs only in the most highly figurative book of the New Testament, and amidst expressions entirely metaphorical; that this very phrase affords it no other support, than what can be derived from an inference which is so extremely equivocal, that the opposite conclusion may be deduced with equal plausibility; and that, while there is not a single passage in which the doctrine is expressed in clear and precise terms, there are many with which it is utterly incompatible.

All the objections which are commonly urged against the cheering and benevolent doctrine, that the whole human race will be ultimately restored to purity and happiness, having been thus fully considered, the mind may now be prepared to enter on an examination of the scriptural evidence which appears to favour it.

Part Fourth.

OF THE SCRIPTURAL EVIDENCE IN FAVOUR OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE FINAL RESTO- RATION OF ALL MANKIND TO PURITY AND HAPPINESS.

IT is admitted, that the term Universal Restoration no where occurs in the Old or New Testament. It has been adopted in this work merely for the sake of brevity and precision. The doctrine of the Scriptures is, that God is the ruler of the world ; that every event is under his direction, and promotes in its appointed measure the purposes of his wise and benevolent administration ; that the natural and moral evil which prevail are the instruments which his wisdom has chosen, no less than the more obvious blessings of existence, to promote the highest advantage of his intelligent creatures : that by his almighty and all-perfect superintendence of events, he will secure this result ; that he has placed mankind in a state of discipline, in order to form and to try their characters ; that those who improve their present advantages, will be rewarded after death with endless felicity ;

that those who neglect and abuse them, and incapacitate themselves for pure enjoyment, will be placed under a painful and lasting discipline, which will correct their evil dispositions and vicious habits, and form in their minds a genuine love of excellence ; that in order to accomplish these benevolent purposes, he has raised up Jesus Christ, whom he has specially and miraculously qualified to execute the most important of them, having with this view revealed to him the glorious gospel, and commissioned him to declare it to the world ; that in reward of the firmness and fidelity, with which he executed this most momentous trust, notwithstanding the danger and suffering to which it exposed him, God has highly exalted him, and made him the medium through which he communicates the greatest blessings to mankind ; that as Jesus revealed the gospel, so he will fulfil its promises, and execute its threatenings ; that as he was the instructor of mankind, so he will be their judge ; that to him is committed the direction of the state of discipline to which the wicked will be consigned ; that as the execution of the purposes, which are comprehended in this vast and benevolent plan, supposes the government of innumerable intelligent beings, and the superintendence of many great and important events, it is termed a kingdom, of which he is said to

be the head ; that he will conduct the government of this kingdom with perfect wisdom, until it shall have accomplished all the purposes for which it is appointed ; until it shall have extirpated sin, destroyed the consequence of it, death, restored universal purity, and produced universal happiness ; that then, being no longer necessary, he will resign his office, restore to Him from whom he received it, the power with which he was invested, in order that the great Sovereign of earth and heaven, the fountain of all being and happiness, may himself be all in all.

Such is the glorious consummation of the divine dispensations which the Scriptures teach us to expect ! Such are the sublime and cheering truths, the evidence of which is now to be detailed !

The principle on which the following investigation of scripture is conducted, and on which it is concluded that the passages which will be cited, express or imply these truths, is that which is adopted in the most exact inquiries to which the human understanding is directed. In every philosophical inquiry, it is admitted that that hypothesis ought to be adopted, which accounts for all the phenomena with the greatest clearness, and which is attended with the fewest difficulties. Whatever theory best explains acknowledged facts, is universally considered most entitled to

regard; and if it solve the several phenomena easily and simply, while every other hypothesis is attended with contradictions and absurdities, no doubt is entertained of its truth. Now the doctrine that all mankind will ultimately be restored to purity and happiness, is this perfect theory, with regard to the divine dispensations, and the scriptural terms by which their nature is expressed. It accords with *every* expression that is used in scripture, concerning the state of mankind in the world to come, and it is confirmed by *all* our best sentiments of the attributes, the providence, and the government of the Supreme Being. But the notions of Endless Misery, and of the total and eternal extinction of intelligence and life, neither accord with *all* the expressions of scripture relative to a future state, nor with our purest and most exalted sentiments of the attributes and proceedings of the Universal Parent. According to the strictest rules of philosophizing, therefore, the first must be regarded as the true hypothesis.

The passages of scripture which favour the opinion that the whole human race will finally be restored to purity and happiness, may be divided into those which imply its truth, and into those which appear precisely and positively to affirm it.

The passages which imply it, are those which contain certain declarations, which must be false, if this opinion be denied, but which are full of truth and beauty, if it be admitted: the passages which appear positively to affirm it, are those to the language of which it seems impossible to affix any other meaning.

CHAPTER I.

OF THE PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE WHICH IMPLY,
THAT ALL MANKIND WILL BE ULTIMATELY RE-
STORED TO PURITY AND HAPPINESS.

UNDER the passages which imply the ultimate restoration of the whole human race to virtue and to happiness, may be arranged,

1. All those which speak of God as the kind and benevolent Father of mankind.

Psalm ciii. 13, 14: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him; for he knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust." Malachi ii. 10: "Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?" Ephes. iv. 6: "There is one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all." We are likewise instructed by our Lord, Matt. vi. 9, to address the Supreme Being in prayer as our Father.

The Scriptures delight to exhibit the Deity to his human offspring in the character of a father. It is the most natural as well as the most endearing manner in which we can conceive of

him. He is our Father in a much more strict and intimate sense than any creature is the parent of another. He constructed the curious and delicate fabric in which our consciousness and intelligence reside. He formed those wonderful organs which are continually at work within us, and which minister equally to life and to enjoyment. He endowed us with those noble faculties by which we are capable of pursuits and pleasures of the same nature with those which constitute his own happiness, whose operation affords us continual gratification, but of which we know nothing except that they are wonderful and glorious. It is he who has so exquisitely adapted our nature to the objects which surround us, that we can scarcely move without experiencing pleasure, and that so many things which interest and delight us, continually crowd upon our senses. It is he who has made us what we are, and his constant energy is necessary to continue us in existence: in the strictest sense it is true, that in him we live, move, and have our being.

And as he is so much more intimately and truly our Father than our human parents, so he must be as much more perfectly so in respect to the disposition with which he regards, and the manner in which he treats us. All that is tender and endearing in the most affectionate

and excellent of human parents can afford us but a faint image of what he is to his whole family of mankind.

Does any good father punish with revenge? Does any tender mother harbour implacable resentment against her child? Would she, if she were able, punish it with endless misery, or inflict upon it intolerable anguish for a very protracted period, and then blot it out of existence?

If a human parent who acted in such a manner would be regarded with universal execration, who can believe an hypothesis which attributes such conduct to the benevolent Father of men? We may be mistaken in the meaning of a word or the accuracy of a criticism, but we cannot err in rejecting opinions which give such an exhibition of the character of God. But in this manner, both the doctrines of Endless Misery, and of absolute, irrevocable Destruction, represent our heavenly Father as treating the greater number of his children, while that of Universal Restoration teaches that his conduct towards every individual of his large family is infinitely more excellent than that of the most wise and benevolent parent. The latter opinion, therefore, is true; the others are false.

2. The ultimate Restoration of the whole human race to purity and happiness is favoured

by all those passages which represent God as *good*.

Ps. xxxiv. 8 : “ O taste and see that the Lord is *good*.” Ps. lii. 1 : “ The goodness of God *endureth continually*.” Ps. cxlv. 9 : “ The Lord is good *to all*, and his tender mercies are over *all his works*.” 1 John iv. 8 : “ GOD IS LOVE.”

If there be any foundation for the doctrine of Endless Misery, or of absolute, irrevocable Destruction, these passages are not true. The doctrine of Endless Misery teaches, that God created the great majority of mankind to make them miserable ; that he called them into being with no other view than to glorify his justice by their eternal condemnation, and that from all eternity he fore-ordained them to this horrid fate. To say of such a Being that he is good, that his very nature is love, that his tender mercies are over all his works, and that his goodness endureth continually, is to destroy all distinction between tenderness and cruelty, and to identify malevolence with benignity.

If it be said that he treats the elect with benevolence, and that these expressions relate only to these favoured individuals, it is replied that this is an assumption which is unsupported by the shadow of proof ; for these passages do not affirm that he is good to the elect, but that he is

good to *all*, and that his tender mercies are over *all his works*.

If he elected a few individuals to happiness, and decreed the great majority to Endless Misery, how can there be any truth in the declaration, that he is good to all? And, if the greater number are to be doomed to torment day and night without intermission, for ever; if in the anguish of their souls they incessantly cry to him for mercy, beseeching him to lighten or shorten their suffering, and if he behold their misery without pity, and turn a deaf ear to their supplications, how can his *tender mercies* be over ALL his works, or his goodness endure continually?

Nor is the doctrine of Destruction consistent with these passages, for according to this opinion the wicked will be raised from the dead, afflicted with terrible and unremitted anguish, for a very protracted period, and then blotted out of existence for ever, so that upon the whole they must be incalculably more miserable than happy. Even if the contrary should be maintained, and it should be said that they will enjoy more than they suffer, still, according even to this concession, these passages can be true only in the lowest sense.

But if the Deity design and pursue the ultimate felicity of all his intelligent creation, what

a light and glory do they shed on his character, and how perfectly do they accord with the noblest ideas we can form of the object of his dispensations !

3. The final restoration of all mankind to purity and happiness is favoured by those passages which speak of God as *merciful*.

Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7: “ The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, and forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin.” 2 Chron. xxx. 9: “ The Lord your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you if you return unto him.” Ps. ciii. 8: “ The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.”

These repeated declarations of the compassion and clemency of God cannot be true, if through the ages of eternity he refuse to be reconciled to the great majority of his creatures. It is vain to endeavour to prove that he is merciful, on the ground that he is willing to forgive the penitent sinner in the present state ; for not to mention that, if there be any truth in the common doctrine of the divine decrees and of election, the pretension is an idle mockery ; were his clemency restricted to this life, he would have infinitely less claim to the character of merciful,

than that man would possess, who should inflict the most intolerable suffering on another for the space of eighty years, without shewing any disposition to relent except for a single hour. There is, indeed, an utter disproportion between the two cases, because this life compared to eternity is inconceivably less than an hour compared to eighty years.

They who contend that the mercy of God is restricted to the present life, ought to remember that they have no scriptural authority for this opinion. Such a notion is never inculcated in the Old or New Testament. There is not a single passage from which it can be fairly deduced. Those which might seem to favour it have been fully considered. The declarations of Scripture are not—The Lord is merciful and gracious, but his clemency is limited to the present state: he is slow to anger and plenteous in mercy, but he becomes implacable and inexorable the moment this life terminates: its language is —“ The Lord is merciful and gracious; slow to anger and plenteous in mercy: he hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities; for as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy towards them that fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so hath

the Lord compassion on them that fear him : for he knoweth our frame : he remembereth that we are dust."

If he place his offending offspring under a discipline which corrects their evil dispositions, and forms in their hearts a genuine love of excellence, this beautiful and affecting description of the Deity is just ; but if he doom them to intolerable, unremitted and unending anguish, or, if after having made them suffer the utmost penalty of their crimes he blot them out of existence for ever, every syllable of it is false !

4. The ultimate happiness of every individual of the human race is favoured by all those passages which positively deny that God will be *angry for ever*.

Ps. xxx. 5 : " His anger endureth but for a moment." Ps. ciii. 9 : " He will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger for ever." Ps. lxxvii. 7—12 : " Will the Lord cast off for ever, and will he be favourable no more ? Is his mercy clean gone for ever ; doth his promise fail for evermore ? Hath God forgotten to be gracious ; hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies ? And I said, this is my infirmity : I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High. I will remember the works of the Lord. I will meditate on thy work, and talk of thy doings." Isa. lxvii. 16 : " I will not contend for ever,

neither will I be always wrath ; for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made.”

How different is this description of the disposition and conduct of the Deity from that which is exhibited by the doctrines of Endless Misery, and of total and eternal Destruction ! They affirm that his anger will flame with relentless fury through all eternity ; the Scriptures declare that his anger endureth but for a moment ; they affirm that the punishment which he will inflict will never terminate ; the Scriptures declare that he will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger for ever : they affirm that he will hereafter have no mercy on the wicked, but cast them from him for ever ; the Scriptures make the most solemn and touching appeal to our own understanding and heart whether this can be true. “ *Will* the Lord cast off for ever ; and will he be favourable no more ? Is his mercy clean gone for ever ? Doth his promise fail for evermore ? Hath God forgotten to be gracious ? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies ? And I said, this is my infirmity ! ”

These words ought to be engraven on the heart. To say that they relate solely to offenders in the present life, is to take for granted the point in dispute, and to affirm what cannot be proved. Is not this language as applicable to future as it

is to present punishment ; to the chastisement of the wicked, as to the correction of him who has fallen from rectitude ? With regard to the former, does it not equally put to us the affecting questions, “ Will he be favourable no more ? Is his mercy clean gone for ever ? Doth his promise fail for evermore ? ” No : it is impossible. Whoever shall attempt to persuade me that there can come a period when he will eternally shut up in anger his tender mercies, I will repeat to him this passage,—I will say, “ It is your infirmity ! ”

5. The Final Restoration of all mankind to purity and happiness is favoured by those passages which represent God as declaring, that he takes no pleasure in the punishment of the wicked.

Ezek. xviii. 23 : “ Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die, saith the Lord God, and not that he should return from his ways and live ? ” xxxiii. 11 : “ As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked should turn from his ways and live. ” 2 Peter iii. 9 : “ The Lord is long-suffering towards us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. ”

The doctrine of Endless Misery teaches, that from all eternity, God, for the praise of his

glorious justice, decreed the great majority of his creatures to irremediable and eternal death ; yet the Scriptures represent him as contradicting this in the most express terms, and in the most solemn manner. *As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked should turn from his ways and live.*

Rev. iv. 11 : “ Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power, for thou hast created all things, and by thy will, or for thy pleasure, they are and were created.”

What cause can there be for an ascription of praise to their Creator, on the part of the greater number of his creatures, if, millions of ages before their existence, he doomed them to intolerable and endless misery ? Could any one who believed such a doctrine speak in this rapturous manner of the work of creation ? But what a delightful meaning is there in this language, and what abundant cause is there for praise, if all intelligent beings are ultimately to be restored to purity and happiness ! Then, indeed, may it be said of the author of this glorious scheme—“ Thou art worthy to receive glory, and honour, and power !”

6. The final Restoration of all mankind to Purity and Happiness, is favoured by those

passages which represent the Deity as chastising his children with the disposition of a parent, and by those which affirm or imply that future punishment will be corrective.

Deut. viii. 5 : “ Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee.” Job v. 17 : “ Happy is the man whom God correcteth, therefore, despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty.” Psalm xciv. 12 : “ Blessed, O Lord, is the man whom thou chastenest.” Heb. xii. 5—11 : “ My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him ; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons : for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not ? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh who corrected us, and we gave them reverence : shall we not rather be in subjection to the Father of Spirits, and live ? For they verily, for a few days, chastened us after their own pleasure ; but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now, no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous ; nevertheless, afterward

it yielded the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.”

These passages declare in the strongest and plainest language, that God chastens his creatures in the same manner as a wise and benevolent parent corrects his child. Those who maintain that this is true only of the virtuous, or that he treats the wicked in this manner in the present life alone, must conceive that he is the Father only of a part of mankind, or that a period will arrive, when his treatment of his children will be unworthy of a good parent.

Matt. xxv. 46: “These shall go away into lasting chastisement, but the righteous into life eternal.”

The word translated punishment in the Received Version, is *κολασις*, a term which is universally allowed to signify chastisement or corrective punishment. It is used in this sense by the Heathen philosophers: “*Dicemus ergo in pœnis respiciant utilitatem ejus qui peccarit, aut ejus cujus intererat non peccatum esse, aut indistincte quorumlibet. Ad horum trium finum primum pertinet pœna quæ philosophis modo, νῆθεσια, modo κολασις, modo παραινεσις, dicitur. Paulo jurisconsulto, pœna quæ constituitur in emendationem, σωφρονισεως ενεκα Platone, Plutarcho ιατρεια ψυχης animi medicatrix, quæ hoc agit ut eum qui peccavit reddat meliorem*

medendi modo qui est per contraria.”* Grotius de Jure Belli et Pacis, lib. ii. cap. 20. sect. 6.

Simpson observes on this word, “ Our Lord, in the awful and impressive description of the proceedings of the last judgment of mankind, has selected the term *κολασις*, in no other place in the New Testament, applied to the future state, in order to explain with the greater precision the final recompense of the sinner. There seems in Matt. xxv. 46, to be an evident allusion to the Septuagint translation of Daniel xii. 2, which was commonly used in Judea, when our Lord appeared. The expression *ζωην αιωνιον*, is literally adopted in order to express the recompense of the righteous. But instead of *αισχυνην αιωνιον*, the expression *κολασιν αιωνιον*, appears to have been purposely substituted, as comprehending that variety of painful chastisement, both in kind, and degree and duration, which the highest ideas of the perfections of the

* We observe, then, that punishment regards the benefit either of the offender or of the offended, or, indeed, of any other persons. The punishment which respects the first of these three purposes, is called by philosophers sometimes *νθεσια*, sometimes *κολασις*, and sometimes *παραινεσις*. According to Paulus, a lawyer, the punishment designed for amendment is by Plato said to be *σωφρονισεως ενεκα*, for the sake of making wiser. And it is called by Plutarch *ιατρεια ψυχης*, the healer of the mind; because, agreeable to the art of healing, it renders him who has sinned better by means of contraries.

Supreme Parent and Ruler naturally lead us to suppose he will inflict upon his children and subjects, according to the nature and magnitude of their offences. Even in human governments, a wise and good magistrate would employ temporary corrective chastisements for the reformation of criminals, that they might be restored to usefulness and happiness in society, in preference to capital punishments, if he could devise proper ones, and secure success in the use of them. Now with respect to the Supreme Lord and Parent of all, there is unerring wisdom to contrive infallible means, boundless goodness to incline him to employ them, and almighty power to accomplish every end that infinite perfection proposes." *

7. The final Purity and Happiness of all mankind is favoured by those passages, which affirm that *all men* will partake of the benefits of the mission and death of Christ.

John xii. 32 : " And I, although I shall be lifted up from the earth, will draw *all men* unto me." Heb. ii. 9 : " We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour, that by the grace of God he might taste death *for every man*." These passages declare

* See Essay, p. 68.

in the plainest language, that every individual of the human race shall be benefited by the mission and death of Christ.

1 Cor. xv. 22: "As through Adam *all* die, so likewise through Christ shall *all* be made alive. In this passage, the evil produced by sin is compared with the benefit received by Christ, and it supposes, that the life imparted by him is a blessing: but if the wicked are to be raised from the slumber of the tomb, only to be visited with severe and protracted punishment, and then destroyed, or to be kept in endless misery, the restoration of their existence, instead of a benefit, is an unspeakable disadvantage.

Rom. v. 15: "That as the offence, so is the free gift: for if through the offence of one, οἱ πολλοί, the many, (that is, *the great body of mankind,—Newcome*) have died, much more the favour of God, and the gift which is through the favour of one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded, εἰς τὰς πολλὰς, unto the many. If by the offence of the one, death reigned by this one, much more those who receive the abounding of favour, and of the gift of justification, shall reign in life by the one man Jesus Christ. So then, as by the offence of one, judgment came upon *all men* to condemnation, so likewise by the righteousness of one, the free gift hath come upon *all men* to justification of life. For as by the disobe-

dience of one man the many were made sinners, (or treated as such, by undergoing death) so likewise by the obedience of one, the many will be made righteous. That where sin abounded, the favour of God has much more abounded : that as sin has reigned unto death, so favour likewise might reign by justification to everlasting life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Nothing can be more evident than that it is the apostle’s intention, in this passage, to represent all mankind, without exception, as deriving greater benefit from the death of Christ, than they suffer injury from the fall of Adam. The universality of the apostle’s expressions is very remarkable. The same many who were made sinners by the disobedience of the one, are made righteous by the obedience of the other. If *all men* are condemned by the offence of the one, *the same all* are justified by the righteousness of the other.

These universal terms so frequently repeated, and so variously diversified, cannot possibly be reconciled to the limitation of the blessings of the gospel to the elect alone, or to a part only of the human race.* Unless the wicked are reformed by their punishment, can there be any truth in the declaration, that the favour of God

* See Improved Version, note in loc.

by Christ abounds much more than sin and death? If the great majority of mankind are to continue in sin and misery through all eternity, or at some remote period to be blotted out of existence, it is they that triumph: they are infinitely more extensive than the abounding of favour. According to both of these doctrines, therefore, the reasoning of the apostle in this passage is totally inconclusive.

The passages which have been quoted, appear decidedly to favour the doctrine of the Ultimate Restoration of all mankind to Purity and Happiness, since in every case a denial of this opinion is a contradiction of the declarations they contain. There are passages, however, which seem still more expressly to confirm the truth of this hypothesis.

CHAPTER II.

OF THE PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE WHICH APPEAR EXPRESSLY TO AFFIRM, THAT ALL MANKIND WILL BE ULTIMATELY RESTORED TO PURITY AND HAPPINESS.

THE passages to be arranged under this head, are those which do not seem to admit of any meaning, unless it be true that the whole human race will finally be restored to virtue and to happiness. Among these are the following:—

Ephes. i. 9, 10: “Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself, that in the dispensation of the fulness of time *he might gather together in one all things in Christ:*” that is, “all persons, all intelligent beings.” *Newcome*. The neuter is here put for the masculine, as in John vi. 39: “And this is the Father’s will, that of all which he hath given me I should lose *nothing*, but should raise *it* up again at the last day.”

This passage seems to affirm, that the great object of the divine dispensations is to unite together, in one holy and happy state, all intel-

gent beings under Jesus Christ. The expression deserves to be well observed: *all things*, or *all intelligent beings*. The primary signification of the word *ανακεφαλαιω*, which the apostle here uses, is to sum up an account, or to reduce many sums to one.* The proper meaning of it in this place seems to be, to unite all intelligent beings under one head; that is, under Jesus. At present this is not the case: they do not all acknowledge his mild and benevolent sway; sin and misery dispute and divide the government of the intelligent creation with him: but we are taught in this passage, that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, every disposition which would oppose him shall be destroyed, and that different as men's character and condition may be at present, they shall all then become his willing subjects, and be rendered holy and happy. As Jesus will be the means of effecting this glorious work, they are said to be gathered together in one under him. This appears to be the plain and natural meaning of the passage: it best accords with the diffusively benevolent spirit of the gospel, with the character of God as the kind father and the wise governor of mankind, and with many other passages of Scripture.

Col. i. 19, 20: "It hath pleased the Father

* See Schleusner.

that in him all fulness should dwell, and having made peace through his blood shed on the cross, that by him he would RECONCILE ALL THINGS TO HIMSELF;" that is, "all intelligent creatures."

Newcome. This passage is parallel to the former. It affirms, that it has pleased the Father to appoint Jesus Christ to be the great instrument of reconciling to himself the whole human race; but how can this possibly be the case, if the greater number remain at enmity with him, and execrate his name through all eternity; or if they are blotted out of existence, because a reconciliation could not be effected between them?

1 Tim. iv. 10: "On this account, we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God who is the saviour of *all men*, (consequently the saviour of the wicked,) but especially of those who believe."

1 Tim. ii. 3, 4: "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have *all men* to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth."

Stonehouse observes, that "the words σωζω, σωζομαι, when spoken with reference to a state of evil or danger, into which a man is fallen, signify to *deliver*, to *rescue*: so Matt. xxvii. 42: 'Others, εσωσεν, he delivered, can he not deliver himself?' But when spoken in reference to a state of happiness or blessing lost, or from which

a man is fallen, it signifies to *restore or recover*: so Luke xix. 10: ‘The Son of Man is come to seek and, σωσαι το απολωλος, to recover that which is lost.’ So that, though in English, we say that a man is *delivered* out of a state of danger or misery, and that he is *restored* into a state of security and happiness; yet in Greek, the same verb answers both purposes.”

He proposes, that these words should be translated in conformity to these observations in the following passages.

“1 Tim. ii. 4: ‘Who wills that all men, σωθηναι, should be, (not saved, but) restored to health, and come to the acknowledgment of the truth.’ John iii. 17: ‘God sent his Son into the world, ινα σωθη ο κοσμος δι’ αυτε, that the world through him, might be (not saved, but) restored.’ 1 Tim. iv. 10. ‘Who is the, σωτηρ, restorer of all men, especially of the faithful, because he saves them even from the wrath prepared.’ 1 John iv. 14: ‘We do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be, σωτηρα τε κοσμου, the restorer of the world,’ notwithstanding its previous doom to the æonian fire. John iv. 42: ‘This is indeed the restorer of the world, the Christ,’ (αληθως ο σωτηρ τε κοσμου, ο Χριστος,) that is, because the world’s recovery or restoration, will be its last resource in Christ, therefore is our Lord thus called its restorer.”

1 John ii. 2: “He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” Here believers, and the world, are particularly distinguished from each other, and it is intimated, that Christ died and was raised to life again, in order to promote the salvation of both.

Philip. ii. 9—11: “Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of beings in heaven and on earth, and under the earth, and that *every tongue* should confess *that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father*.

How beautifully does this passage harmonize with the doctrine, that every intelligent being shall ultimately be made holy and happy! How incompatible is it with the doctrines of endless misery, and of total and irrevocable destruction! According to the former opinion, every knee *will* bow down, in the name of Jesus, in devout and holy adoration of his God and Father: every tongue *will* confess that Jesus is Lord; that he is the head of a wise and benevolent government, which has completely accomplished every end for which it was instituted, and this acknowledgment which will spontaneously burst from every heart, will redound to the glory of God the Father, who will appear to have

chosen the best means to produce the most glorious ends. But if the great majority of mankind are to be kept alive for ever in intolerable anguish; or to be preserved in misery for a long period, and then totally destroyed, how can they possibly bow down in the name of Jesus, and acknowledge that he is Lord to the glory of God the Father?

Heb. ii. 8: "Thou hast put *all things* in subjection under his feet: for in that he put all things in subjection under him, *he left nothing that is not put under him*, but now we see not yet all things put under him:" x. 12, 13: "But this person, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, is for ever seated at the right hand of God, waiting after this till his enemies be made his footstool."

It is obvious, that the subjection here spoken of, is a willing obedience to the authority and government of Christ:* it has already been proved, that the expression, all things, signifies all intelligent beings: it is affirmed, then, in this passage, that although mankind are not at present his willing subjects, they shall become so, and that no individual is excepted. It is

* This is evident, because as the instrument of fulfilling the designs of the Deity, all mankind are already subject to him in every other sense.

farther declared, that he is now seated at the right hand of God, that is, invested with the necessary power by his Father; waiting till his enemies are made his footstool. By his enemies are meant sin, and death the consequence of sin: in order that he may effectually destroy them, he is represented as seated on the throne of the universe, together with the Sovereign Ruler of it. How can such a representation, figurative as it no doubt is, be reconciled with the endless prevalence of sin and misery, or with their complete triumph in accomplishing the total destruction of the great majority of mankind?

1 Cor. xv. 24—28: “Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power: for he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under him: but when he saith, all things are put under him, it is manifest, that he is excepted, who did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him who did put all things under him, that God may be all in all.”

From this passage, it seems evident, first, that Christ is at present at the head of a kingdom: secondly, that the object of this kingdom is to

bring every intelligent being into willing subjection to God the Father: thirdly, that it shall gradually, and at last completely accomplish this end: and fourthly, that as soon as this event happens, this kingdom itself, having fulfilled every purpose for which it was instituted, shall cease, in order that God the Father, the fountain of all being, authority and good, may be alone and eternally Supreme. “Then cometh the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God the Father; when he shall himself become subject to him who put all things under him, **THAT GOD MAY BE ALL IN ALL.**”

How is it possible that these declarations can be accomplished, upon any other supposition than that of the ultimate and universal prevalence of purity, excellence and happiness? How can Christ put down all rule and authority, if through the ages of eternity, a malignant and omnipotent spirit (called the devil) divide the government of the intelligent creation with him, and actually succeed in making the great majority of mankind his victims? How can Christ *subdue all things unto himself*, if this malevolent being and his agents eternally counteract and oppose him? How can God be all in all, if the greater number of his creatures incessantly execrate his name, and vent the most horrid blasphemies against him? How can death be

the last enemy that is destroyed, if in its last conflict with man, it completely triumph, by blotting out of existence for ever, millions of millions of human beings? The only idea it is possible to annex to the destruction of death, is the prevalence of life ; but if (to repeat what has already been said) death effect the total and eternal extinction of the conscious existence of the great majority of mankind, it is not vanquished, it is the victor ; it is not destroyed, it triumphs.

There appears to be no reason for restricting the application of this passage solely to the righteous, as, with a view of avoiding the force of the preceding observations, some have contended ; because the context does not require this limitation ; because the expressions which the apostle employs, are of too universal a signification to admit of it, and because it is difficult to conceive that any thing but the wish to support a system, could have suggested the idea, or indicated the necessity of it.

Such is the scriptural evidence in favour of the ultimate and universal prevalence of holiness and happiness. Every passage which has been cited, appears so necessarily to imply the truth of this opinion, that a denial of the one, is a contradiction of the other, while to many of these texts it seems impossible to affix any other

meaning. There is not a single passage in the Old or New Testament which does not perfectly harmonize with this doctrine; but several of the most striking, impressive and cheering assurances of scripture, are totally incompatible with the opinions which oppose it. With the highest and noblest conceptions we can form of the nature and dispensations of the Deity; with the nature of man, and the nature of punishment; in a word, with all that natural and revealed religion teach concerning God, concerning his human offspring, and concerning a future state, it perfectly accords. With this body of evidence in its favour, and with no real counter-evidence of any kind to oppose it, it is surely unreasonable to doubt its truth.

If any one should fear that its inculcation may lessen the dread of future punishment, and thus operate to the disadvantage of piety and virtue, the apprehension must originate in a misconception of the doctrine, or an ignorance of human nature. To teach men that they will be visited with a just degree of punishment for the sins they commit; that every deviation from rectitude, even the slightest and the most secret, that every improper feeling and thought which is cherished, *must* bring with it a proportionate degree of suffering; must *inevitably* do so, unless the constitution of the mind, and the

whole frame of nature be changed ; that those who indulge in the least degree, in vice, must necessarily, in all situations, and at all seasons, be the worse for it, and that if they continue in a vicious course to the end of life, both the nature of the case, and the repeated and solemn declarations of scripture assure us, that the pain they will be made to suffer in a future world, will be most severe and lasting ; to suppose that such doctrine will encourage sin, is to imagine that men can be enamoured of misery, and that to excite them to any particular course of conduct, it is only necessary to convince them, that it will terminate in their ruin.

If men cannot be restrained from vice, by the apprehension of a reasonable and just degree of punishment, it is vain to hope to deter them by menaces, which they are satisfied are both unreasonable and impossible. To suppose that they will encourage themselves in sin, from a persuasion that the misery which they must inevitably bring upon themselves in consequence of it, will terminate in their reformation, is to imagine that they are insane as well as vicious, and to betray the baseness of our own hearts, by shewing that we form a worse opinion of mankind, than the worst of men deserve.

Indeed it is hardly conceivable, that the reasonable and just, the solemn and impressive

sanctions which the Christian religion gives to the Christian law, would be attended with no greater moral benefit, than it is to be feared they are, were they always scripturally enforced. It requires, however, but little acquaintance with human nature to know, that in order to render the fear of punishment availing in the hour of temptation, it is absolutely necessary to satisfy the mind both of its equity and certainty. The passions of the heart never were, and never can be counteracted, either by actual injustice, or by unreasonable menaces: and to teach that an eternity of suffering will be the consequence of the slightest offence, is to open the floodgates of sin; to deprive the mind of the most powerful motives to struggle against its improper inclinations, and even to stimulate it to the pursuit of the unhallowed objects of its desire, by forcing it to suspect the weakness, if not to doubt the reality of the checks by which it is attempted to restrain it. Were there, therefore, no other argument against the doctrines of Endless Misery, and of total Destruction, than that afforded by their tendency to lessen the sanctions of morality, by destroying the fear of punishment, this alone would be sufficient to justify a distrust of their truth.

The effects of the unamiable doctrine of Endless Misery, and of its kindred opinions on

the temper and conduct, have been strikingly depicted by an able advocate of the doctrine of Destruction. “According to men’s sentiments of God, and of the designs and measures of his government,” observes Mr. Bourn, in his *Discourse on the Gospel Doctrine of Future Punishment*, “such hath been the influence of religion on their temper and conduct. And if they have not framed to themselves a God after their own evil hearts, they have framed their own hearts agreeable to that false and evil character which they were taught to ascribe to God. And when they have believed the Deity to love and hate, to elect and reprobate nations, parties or individuals, without reason or regard to the ends of good government, they themselves have become more arbitrary, bigoted, fierce, unmerciful, and more addicted to hate, and persecute their fellow-creatures, all who were not of their own church, and whom they supposed to be reprobated of God.

“It is hardly credible, that inhumanity and cruelty would ever have been carried to such excess in the Christian world, as they actually have been, had they not derived countenance and support from these antichristian and barbarous notions. Tyrants and persecutors, if they have not invented these doctrines, yet have applied them to excuse to their own con-

sciences, and to vindicate to others, the most iniquitous and cruel proceedings; and when they have made the very worst use of their power in persecuting good men, at least, men who deserved no such punishment, they have persuaded themselves and others, that they were acting like the Deity, espousing his cause, and maintaining his character and his glory.

“ The court of *inquisition*, as established in many countries, and as far as it differs from civil courts of judicature, is declared by the authors and maintainers of it, to be the nearest imitation of the divine tribunal, and it is avowedly founded upon, and justified by the doctrines of reprobation, and of eternal torments. Jews, infidels and heretics, are judged in that court to be criminals, and are condemned. And how do they vindicate this procedure, but by supposing them to be all reprobated and abhorred of God? And they execute them, not by a quick despatch, but by the most lingering torments. And what do they plead for this cruelty, but that it is an act of faith; that they are doing the work of God, and that he will expose those wretches to the like torments for ever? Thus they conquer nature by faith, as they express it; that is, they extinguish all sense of justice and relentings of mercy in their own nature, and harden themselves in

iniquity and barbarity, by the belief of those very doctrines we are exposing; and by them they defend themselves in the face of the world, and give a colour and sanction of religion to the most enormous wickedness."

The doctrine, on the other hand, which it is the object of the preceding pages to establish, discloses a principle which is more benevolent in its tendency, and which, were it properly felt and invariably regarded in the affairs of life, would have a happier effect on society, than any other opinion which has ever engaged the attention of men. It leads to a distinction which is but beginning to be observed even by the intelligent and enlightened, and which, when it shall come to be general, will alter astonishingly the moral condition of the world. It leads to an exact discrimination between the criminal and the crime: while it inspires us with abhorrence of the offence, it softens the heart with compassion for the unhappy condition of the offender; induces us to do every thing in our power to change it; to give him better views and better feelings. When we hear of the perpetration of a crime, we are too apt to think only of punishment. What suffering can be too great for such a wretch! is the exclamation which bursts from almost every lip. The

sentiment is worthy of the unlovely doctrines which produce and cherish it. A more benevolent system would excite a different feeling. What can be done to reclaim the unhappy offender! What means can be taken to enlighten his mind, and meliorate his heart! What discipline is best adapted to his mental and moral disorder! What will lead him back to virtue and to happiness most speedily, and with the least pain! Such is the feeling of the mind enlightened by the generous doctrine we have endeavoured to establish. Could it but enter the heart of every legislator; did it but guide the hand that constructs the cell of the poor captive; did it apportion his pallet of straw and his scanty meal; did it determine the completeness and the duration of his exclusion from the light of day, and the pure breeze of heaven; did it apply his manacles, (if disdaining to treat a human being with more indignity than is practised towards the most savage brutes, it did not dash his chains to the earth,) what a different aspect would these miserable mansions soon assume! What different inhabitants would they contain! Prisons would not then be the hot-beds of vice, in which the youthful offender grows into the hardened criminal, and the want of shame succeeds the abolition of principle, but

hospitals of the mind, in which its moral disorder is removed by the application of effectual remedies.

The person who habitually contemplates all mankind as children of one common Father, and appointed to one common destiny, cannot be a persecutor or a bigot. He may see much error, which he may lament, and much misconduct, which he may pity; but a generous affection towards the whole human race will dilate his heart. To the utmost of his ability he will enlighten the ignorant, correct the erring, sustain the weak, bear with the prejudiced, and reclaim the vicious. Firm to his own principles, he will not trench on the liberty of others. He will not harshly censure, nor suspect an evil motive where integrity and conscience obviously direct the conduct. Mildness will be on his lips; forbearance will mark his actions; and universal charity will connect him with the wise and good of all climes, and of all religions.

He who believes that a Being of almighty power, unerring wisdom, and unbounded love, is seated at the helm of affairs, and is making every event promote, in its appointed measure, the highest happiness of all intelligent creatures, must possess perpetual serenity and peace. The storm of adversity may gather above him and burst upon his head, but he is prepared against

it, and it cannot dismay him. He knows that the evils which encompass him are only blessings in disguise. The fair face of nature smiles upon him with a brighter radiance. The boundless expanse of heaven above him, the painted plain beneath him, the glorious sun which diffuses light and life over the ample and beautiful creation are magnificent gifts of his Father, on which his enlightened eye beholds engraven the promise of his higher destiny. The narrow precincts of the tomb can neither bound nor obstruct his enlarged view: it extends beyond the circle of the earth, and reaches to that celestial world, where progression in excellence is infinite, and happiness is unchanging and immortal. Nothing can disturb his steady confidence. In the most awful moment of his being, his feeling is sublime as his destiny is glorious: even while he is partially subdued by death, and dragged to the confines of the tomb, while he is sinking into it, and it closes over him, he can exclaim in triumph, “O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory! Thanks be to God who giveth me the victory, through Jesus Christ, my Lord!”

Such are the effects of an enlightened and scriptural view of the perfections and government of God, and the nature and destiny of man. Indeed, a firm persuasion that our Creator

is possessed of every possible excellence, that he is our constant and best friend, that we are entirely at his merciful disposal, that he is conducting us, and all our brethren of mankind, by the wisest means to the highest happiness, and that the natural and moral disorders which afflict us, are the instruments by which he will eventually establish the universal and eternal reign of purity and bliss, cannot but tend to expand the heart, to cherish the benevolent affections, to soften the manners, and to unite the whole human race in the tenderest bonds of friendship and affection. Were it right to judge of the general effect, which the frequent and serious contemplation of these sublime and cheering truths would have on the mind, by the feeling of which he who has made this humble attempt to illustrate and establish them, has been conscious while engaged in the pleasing task, with sincerity he might say, that it would be highly favourable to benevolence and to happiness. A more ardent love of the Supreme Being, a purer and warmer attachment to his fellow-creatures, a more anxious desire to promote the attainment of genuine excellence, both in himself and others, has glowed in his heart, while meditating on these delightful subjects. Uniformly has he seemed to himself to rise from the contemplation, more deeply affected than

before, with the emotions of piety and benevolence. May the perusal of these pages produce the same happy effect on the mind of the reader. May it inspire him with a fervent love of God ; may it cherish in his bosom an ardent and generous attachment to the whole family of mankind ; may it enable him to enjoy with a more reasonable, pure and social satisfaction, the blessings of existence, and to sustain, in a manner worthy of a man and a Christian, the affliction which may await him ; may it continually cheer him with the most glorious hopes, and fit him to realize them ; and may the anticipation of the universal and everlasting reign of Purity and Happiness, hasten his own attainment of both !

THE END.

APPENDIX.

TO the Reader who may be desirous of investigating farther, the subject discussed in the preceding pages, it may, perhaps, be useful to be acquainted with the names of the works which at different times have appeared upon it. I have, therefore, drawn out a list of the chief of those with which I am at present acquainted, to which I at first intended to have added some citations from the works of the more early Christian writers, in order to shew, that “this opinion is not so strange and unusual, nor counted so absurd a tenet by the pious and learned of elder times, as it is by the generality of persons in the present day imagined to be :” but this could not have been done without a considerable enlargement of the volume, which has already swelled to a bulk much beyond what was originally contemplated.

In the early writings on this subject, as well as in some modern publications, there is much which appears to me to be false and inconclusive, both in the principles upon which the doctrine of Restoration is founded, and in the passages of scripture which are cited to prove it; but in all of them there is much that is solid and excellent, and I believe I may venture to affirm, that there is not one contained in the present list, from the perusal of which the intelligent and pious will not derive both pleasure and improvement.

Origen is celebrated for having maintained and propagated the opinion, that the punishment of the wicked will be limited

and corrective, and that they will be ultimately restored to purity and happiness. Clemens Alexandrinus, the master of Origen, Gregory Nazianzen, Gregory Nyssen, Sulpicius Severus, Domitianus, bishop of Ancyra, and Facundus, appear to have entertained the same opinion.

In modern times, the works which have appeared on this subject are numerous. There is an ingenious piece written upon it in French, by a nobleman and minister of the court of the King of Prussia, entitled, *Entretiens sur la Restitution Universelle de la Creation*; or, *Conferences upon the Universal Restitution of the Creation*, betwixt Dositheus and Theophilus.

Dr. Henry More, in his *Divine Dialogues*, printed in the year 1668, speaks very favourably of this opinion.

Dr. Tillotson, Archbishop of Canterbury, seems to incline to this opinion, though he speaks on the subject with much doubt. See his fourth volume of *Sermons*, p. 164.

There is a letter concerning the opinions of Origen, written by a Bishop of the Church of England, and printed in the year 1664, in which there are many strong and extremely well-written passages in favour of this opinion. See *Preface to The Restoration of All Things*. By Jeremy White.

The Restoration of All Things; or, a *Vindication of the Grace and Goodness of God*, to be manifested at last in the *Recovery of his whole Creation, out of their Fall*. By Jeremy White. London, 1712.

Dr. Newton, Bishop of Bristol, in his *Dissertations* in his *Works*, will be found an able and ardent advocate of this opinion.

The World Unmasked; or, the *Philosopher the greatest Cheat*. In twenty-four *Dialogues*, between Crito a *Philosopher*, Philo a *Lawyer*, and Erastus a *Merchant*. To which is added, the *State of Souls separated from their Bodies*. Being an *Epistolary Treatise*, wherein is proved, by a variety of arguments, deduced from *Holy Scripture*, that the *Punishments of*

the Wicked will not be Eternal, and all objections against it solved. London, 1736.

An Essay on the Scheme and Conduct, Procedure and Extent, of Man's Redemption, wherein is shewn from the Holy Scriptures, that this great work is to be accomplished by a gradual Restoration of Man and Nature, to their primitive state. By W. Worthington, A. M. London, 1748. 2d edition.

The Philosophical Principles of Natural and Revealed Religion, unfolded in a Geometrical order. By the Chevalier Ramsay. 2 vols. quarto. Vol. 1. Book vi. Prop. lviii. London, 1751.

Universal Restitution; a Scripture Doctrine. This proved in several letters, wrote on the Nature and Extent of Christ's Kingdom. Wherein the Scripture Passages, falsely alleged in proof of the Eternity of Hell Torments, are truly translated and explained. By Mr. Stonehouse, Rector of Islington. London, 1761.

The Mystery hid from ages and Generations, made manifest by the Gospel Revelation; or, the Salvation of All Men, the grand thing aimed at in the Scheme of God, as opened in the New Testament Writings, and entrusted with Jesus Christ to bring into effect. By Charles Chauncy, D. D. of Boston in New England. London, 1784. Also, by the same Author, The Benevolence of the Deity considered. Boston, 1784.

An Humble Attempt to Investigate and Defend the Scripture Doctrine concerning the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. To which is added, Observations concerning the Mediation of Jesus Christ, in the various dispensations of God the Father, and the final issue of his administration. By James Purves. Edinburgh, 1784. 2d edition.

Thoughts on the Divine Goodness, relating to the Government of Moral Agents, particularly displayed in Future Rewards and Punishments. Translated from the French of O. F. Petit-pierre.

Observations on Man, his Frame, his Duty, and his Expectations. In Two Parts. By David Hartley, M. A. Johnson, London, 1791.

It would be presumption in the humble Author of these pages, to say any thing in praise of such a work as the Observations on Man. It does honour to human nature. One feels proud to belong to the same order of intelligences with the mind which could compose it. All in the first volume, which relates to the law of association, and to the faculties of the mind, and the whole of the second volume, can never be perused without making the reader better acquainted with himself and with his duties, and more in love with his fellow-beings and with his Creator. That, which in the conclusion of the second volume relates to the Final Happiness of all mankind, is truly worthy of the philosopher, the philanthropist, and the Christian.

Natural and Revealed Religion explaining each other. In Two Essays. The first shewing what Religion is Essential to Man. The second, the State of Souls after death, as discovered by Revelation. Harleian Miscellany. Quarto, vol. vi. p. 39: Octavo, vol. ii. p. 494. London, 1795.

The Universal Restoration, Exhibited in a series of Dialogues between a Minister and his Friend. Wherein the most formidable objections are stated, and fully answered. By Elhanan Winchester. 4th edition. Revised and Corrected, with Notes Critical and Explanatory. By W. Vidler. London, 1799.

Conversations on the Divine Government, shewing, that every thing is from God, and for good to all. By Theophilus Lindsey, M. A. Johnson, London, 1802.

Letters to Mr. Fuller on the Universal Restoration, with a statement of the Facts attending that Controversy, and some Strictures on Scrutator's Review. By W. Vidler. London, 1803.

An Essay on the Duration of a Future State of Punishments and Rewards. By John Simpson. London, 1803.

Eternity of Hell Torments Indefensible—An Essay on Future Punishment. By R. Wright. Eaton, London. 2nd edition.

Theological Disquisitions. 2 vols. By T. Cogan, M. D. Vol. 2d. p. 367. London. Cadell and Davies.

Discourses on Universal Restitution, delivered to the Society of Protestant Dissenters in Lewin's Mead, Bristol. By John Prior Estlin, LL. D. Longman, Hurst, Rees, &c. London, 1813.

Finis.

